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THE

TRAGEDIES

OF

ÆSCHYLUS.

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ÆSCHYLUS;

TRANSLATED BY

R. POTTER.

A NEW EDITION, CORRECTED,

WITH NOTES.

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OXFORD,

PRINTED BY AND FOR BLISS AND BAXTER;

AND F. C. AND J. RIVINGTON, AND MESSRS. LONGMAN, HURST, REES, ORME, AND BROWN, LONDON.

1812.

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OF

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PREFACE.

MAIN

THE noble author, with whose remaining tragedies the public is here presented, was an Athenian of an honourable family, distinguished for the sublimity of his genius and the ardour of his martial spirit. In his youth he had read Homer with the warmest enthusiasm; and finding his great master unrivalled in the possession of the Epic, he early conceived the design of creating a new province for himself, and forming the Drama; so much we may be allowed to infer from the fable, that whilst he was yet a boy Bacchus appeared to him as he lay asleep in a vineyard, and commanded him to write tragedies. This noble design he soon executed, and before the twenty-fifth year of his age began to entertain his countrymen with representations worthy of an Athenian audience. He had pursued these studies about ten years, when Darius invaded Greece. His generals, Datis and Artaphernes, with an army of two hundred thousand foot and ten thousand horse were now advanced to

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the plains of Marathon, distant only ten miles from Athens. The danger, which threatened his country, called forth the martial spirit of our poet; and very honourable mention is made of him, and his two brothers, Cynægirus and Amynias, for their eminent valour in that battle: to have wanted courage on such an occasion would have been a mark of the most abject baseness; but to be distinguished in an action, where every soldier was an hero, is a proof of superior merit: in a picture representing the battle of Marathon the portrait of Æschylus was drawn: this was all the honour that Miltiades himself received from the state for his glorious conduct on that day; he was placed at the head of the ten commanders, and drawn in the act of encouraging the soldiers and beginning the battle.

Some time after, Cynægirus was one of the four naval commanders, who, with an armament of one thousand Grecians, defeated thirty thousand Persians; but he lost his life in the action.

Ten years after the battle of Marathon, when Xerxes made that immense preparation to revenge the defeat of his father, we find the two surviving brothers exerting their courage in the sea-fight off Salamis: here Amynias, too boldly laying hold of a Persian ship, had his hand lopped off with a sabre; but Æschylus defended him, and saved his life; and the Athenians decreed him the first ho-

nours, because he was the first to attack the commander of the Persian fleet, shattered the ship to pieces, and killed the Satrap. It is observed that the two brothers were ever after inseparable. The following year Æschylus acquired fresh glory in the battle of Platæa, where the brave Persian Mardonius was defeated and slain.

Having taken this active part in three the most memorable battles that grace the annals of Greece, and distinguished himself as a good citizen and a brave man, he returned with ardour to his former studies, and completed his design of making the Drama a regular, noble, and rational entertainment. He wrote about seventy tragedies, and was in great esteem with his countrymen: but upon some disgust in the latter part of his life he retired from Athens to the court of Hiero king of Sicily, where about three years after he died in the sixty-ninth year of his age. The cause of this disgust is variously related: some impute it to his impatience of the rising fame of Sophocles, yet a young man, to whom the prize was adjudged against him; others to the preference given to the Elegies of Simonides written in honour of those, who fell in the field of Marathon.

But to have excelled in Elegy could have added no glory to the superior genius of Æschylus: neither does it appear probable that such a contest should

have happened thirty years after the battle was fought. From the other charge one would wish to vindicate so great a name; and happily it carries its own confutation with it; for whether Sophocles was only seven or seventeen years younger than Æschylus, which is not precisely determined, he could not be a young man when the other was sixty-four; and we know that the prize was adjudged to the last exhibition of Æschylus, which consisted of his Agamemnon, the Choephoræ, the Furies, and a satyric piece. But the tragedy of the Furies gave great offence to the city; and the poet, whether for that or on some other pretence, was accused of impiety. His brother Amynias pleaded his cause: the Athenians were struck with this instance of fraternal affection, they reverenced their maimed veteran, and Æschylus was acquitted. But such a spirit was not formed to submit to the affront; it made too deep an impression to be effaced; and the poet quitted the city with great indignation, declaring with a noble pride that he would entrust his tragedies to posterity, certain that he should receive from thence the honour he deserved. This honour the Athenians soon paid to his noble works: by a decree of the senate, never granted to any other, they offered rewards to any man that should again exhibit his plays; they frequently adjudged the prize to him after his decease, and acknowledged him *the Father of Tragedy*.

To comprehend the justness of this honourable appellation, and to form a precise idea of the originality of Æschylus, it will be necessary to trace the Tragic Muse from her birth to her yet infirm state when this poet gave her strength, spirit, and dignity. The story has been told, it seems, twenty times already; let it not give offence if it be told once more: it shall be a short tale. Tragedy then was at first no more than a rustic song in honour of Bacchus, attending the sacrifice of a goat, an animal hated by the God because its bite is particularly hurtful to the vine. What was originally no more that an accidental frolic became an annual custom, next a public sacrifice, and thence an established rite; for as every thing in Pagan antiquity was sacred, sports and amusements were changed into feasts, and the temples were converted into theatres: but this by due degrees. The Grecians, advancing in polished manners, carried into their towns a feast that sprung from the leisure of the country: their best poets took a pride in composing these religious hymns to the honour of Bacchus, and embellished them with the agreeable entertainments of music and dancing. After a length of time, the songs advancing in perfection, it was found necessary to give the singer some relief; and that the company might be amused during the pauses of the music, an actor was introduced: his part could be no other than a single speech, setting forth that he represented Hercules, or Theseus, or

some other hero of antiquity, and had performed such or such an illustrious achievement: at the next pause another personated character advanced; at the next, another; but each unrelated and unconnected with the other. This we imagine to be the state of things, till Thespis and Phrynicus had the address to continue the same interlocutor through every pause of the music, and to make him the narrator of one uniform and continued story. The novelty had the good fortune to please; and as the stories were interesting, the songs in honour of Bacchus ceased to amuse, till by degrees they lost their original design, and took their colouring from the intermediate representation. Such was the rude state of Tragedy, when Æschylus conceived the great design of forming it into a new species of poetry that should rival even the Epic in dignity. The humble arbour interwove with vine branches gave place to scenes of astonishing grandeur; the actor, no longer mounted on the cart of Thespis with his face smeared over with lees of wine, or covered with a mask formed from the bark of a tree, now trod a spacious stage, magnificently habited in a robe of honour and the stately buskin; even the mask, that eternal disgrace of the Athenian theatre, wore a new and elegant form expressive of the character represented. But these exterior decorations were proofs only of the taste of Æschylus: his superior genius appeared in giving life to the piece, by introducing the dialogue,

without which there could be no action; and from this circumstance it is that he is with the highest propriety called the Father of the Drama. It is commonly said that Æschylus never produced more than two speakers upon the stage at the same time; there are proofs to the contrary, though he generally adhered to that simple plan: but the new part, which the Chorus now took, amply supplied what we should call that poverty of the stage.

The Music and the Dance could not, without infinite offence, be withdrawn from the gay and lively Athenians: Æschylus therefore retained the Ode and Music, which properly speaking constituted the original Tragedy; but he adapted it to his plan, and interested it in the action; thereby giving an unity of design to the whole, an agreeableness and splendor to the spectacle, and adding the force and spirit of Lyric Poetry to the gravity and magnificence of the Tragic style: but such was the simplicity of ancient manners, supported by truth and decency, that the Chorus yet retained the moral and sacred air of the first institution; hence we find it always grave, sententious, sublime, and ardent in the cause of liberty, virtue, and religion.

Æschylus had studied Homer with attention and judgment; from him he might learn propriety and dignity of character, sublimity of conception, and

magnificence of expression: and it was impossible for him not to observe the necessity of building his plan upon one great and interesting action; but in this nature and good sense prescribed a different conduct to the Tragic and the Epic poet. In the closet the mind may be agreeably entertained by the Epic muse, whilst she leads us backwards and forwards through the various fortunes of her hero, and sometimes makes excursions in pursuit of incidental adventures; whilst the imagination loves to attend her in her flights, and disdains to be confined by the narrow limits of time and place. But where the poetic imitation is made by action, and represented at once to the eye, a severer discipline becomes necessary; that faithful monitor checks the rovings of fancy, exacts a sober regard to unity of time and place, and demands a simpler plan: the good sense of Æschylus led him to observe this; and in allusion to it he often used to say, with much modesty, that his tragedies were only single dishes taken from the great feast of Homer.

But if the Tragic Muse lost any thing in the regions of imagination, she found herself amply recompensed by the empire she acquired over the passions; the imitation of nature is her province, as well as the Epic Muse's; and this imitation is stronger and more perfect in action than in narration. Æschylus, by introducing the Dialogue and engaging the Chorus in the interest of the Drama,

gave birth to Action properly so called, and placed the Actors in such a lively manner before the eyes of the spectators, that they suffered themselves to be agreeably deceived, they forgot that the high-wrought scene was fictitious, and entered into the interests and passions of the persons represented with real emotion. This also required a different conduct in the Tragic and the Epic Poet: the province of the latter is to instruct and delight; and he marches on to his end with a majestic pace through the extensive regions of moral, passion, and description: Æschylus perceived that the Drama is confined to one point of place, and one point of time; that therefore its business is to advance with rapidity, and seize the heart at once: the passions then are its peculiar province. It is finely conceived by P. Brumoy that Æschylus represented the Epos to his mind as a majestic queen seated on her throne, her brow shaded with clouds, but so as to discover great designs and wonderful revolutions: whilst his strong imagination figured tragedy as bathed in tears, her poignard in her hand, attended by terror and pity, preceded by despair, and followed by woe.

This great master was well acquainted with the human heart; he found it more averse to misery than desirous of happiness, and tremblingly alive to the shocks of fear, that gives us continual notice of the evils inseparable from human life. Closely

allied to this passion is another, that makes the heart recoil at the sight of those miseries which befal another, and to which we are ourselves equally liable. Terror and pity then are the strongest, the most common, and therefore the most dangerous of all the passions; they overwhelm the human heart, render it incapable of bearing up against the repeated impressions of ills, and of discharging with a proper degree of firmness the necessary duties of life. To *purge* these passions, to take away their pernicious qualities, and preserve whatever they have of useful, is the business in common of the philosopher and the poet; but these effect their ends by different means; the former applies himself to the understanding by the cool deductions of reason: the poet plays the passions against themselves, expels terror by terror, and pity by pity, and makes the weapon, that gave the wound, perform the cure. The evils, of which we are either spectators or sufferers in the larger theatre of human life, strike the heart with a terror that crushes all its powers, or with a pity that dissolves them: but in the mimic scene the poet by captivating the imagination has the address to convey certain sensations of pleasure, of which we cannot divest ourselves, and thereby interests our attention to the fictitious scenes spreading over the soul that most exquisite of all its feelings, a calm dignity of grief that at once chastises and refines it, and thereby teaching the heart to support its own afflictions

with manly fortitude, or to feel for the afflictions of others with a sensibility corrected by reason. These are so evidently the effects of the ancient Drama, that they are from thence deduced as rules for its construction; and to refuse the great poet the honour of having this design in the plan of his tragedies, would be as violent an injustice as to deny that the great painter *, when he delineated the dying hero, intended to impress us with a reverence of his unshaken fortitude, and to awake in our breasts the passions of admiration, love, pity, and grief, which are so strongly marked in the countenances and attitudes of his surrounding friends.

Thus tragedy owes its existence to the creative hand of Æschylus: like his own Prometheus, he not only gave it being and form, but animated it with the brightest ray of ethereal fire; leaving posterity to admire the force of his genius, and to doubt whether he was ever excelled, or even equalled, till our Shakespear arose blessed with an happier invention and more extensive powers. It is pleasant however to observe in what manner some writers, who would take it ill to be denied the first rank in criticism, speak of this author. Sublimity of conception, magnificence of style, and the high tragic spirit they graciously allow him; in this they safely build upon the judgment of Longinus Ho-

* Mr. West, in his picture of the death of General Wolf.

race, and Quintilian, from whence there is no appeal: the same judgment had also pronounced him sometimes harsh and incorrect; and so, without adverting to the meaning of these great critics, that Longinus is speaking of the boldness of his imagery, and Quintilian, as if commenting on Horace, of his style, which had not yet acquired its just accuracy and correctness, they carry the censure into the composition of his tragedies, which they represent as wild, irregular, and frequently fantastic; his plots, as rude and inartificial; his scenes, as unconnected and ill-placed; his characters, as strongly marked, but *all* partaking of that wild fierceness which is the characteristic of the author. Some, and amongst these are the best French critics, represent him as difficult, obscure, and in some places scarcely to be understood: Another tells us that his thoughts rise in a natural succession; that instead of being perplexed, one runs along with him, nay often before him: We are indeed gravely recommended to take his soul and genius, in some degree, along with us; that does not fall to the share of every reader, nor of every critic; but to an Acumen, that finds no obscurity in Lycophron, no wonder that Æschylus is even familiar.

The amiable candour of a fine writer, who has joined an accurate taste to the deepest penetration, and the finest sensibility to the most chastised judgment, teaches us thus to apologize for heaven-born

genius, that acts from something superior and antecedent to rules; "Great indulgence is due to the "errors of original writers, who, quitting the beaten track which others have travelled, make daring incursions into unexplored regions of invention, and boldly strike into the pathless sublime: "it is no wonder if they are often bewildered, "sometimes benighted: yet surely it is more eligible to partake the pleasure and the hazard of "their adventures, than still to follow the cautious "steps of timid imitators through trite and common "roads. Genius is of a bold enterprising nature, "ill adapted to the formal restraints of critic institutions, or indeed to lay down to itself rules of "nice discretion."—*Essay on the writings and genius of Shakespear.*——But even this generous apology is seldom wanted for Æschylus, except in his tragedy of Prometheus: there indeed the poet has given free scope to his unbounded imagination, and exerted the strength and ardour of his genius with a wild and terrible magnificence; the limits of this world were not sufficient for his extensive and daring spirit, but it made excursions beyond the walks of mortal man: each personated character is a Divinity, and the illustrious sufferer an ancient God of the high and haughty race of Titan, unworthily punished for his benevolence, and prescient that no submission could mitigate the severity of his fate; here that horrid grandeur of the scene has a peculiar propriety; and the reader of

taste does not wish to see Prometheus abate any thing of that unconquerable spirit, with which he defies the Thunderer. In Æschylus the sublime is truly expressive of the elevation of his mind: born with a soul of fire, and animated with whatever is great and noble, all his ideas are magnificent and full of energy; what he conceived boldly he expressed with a correspondent dignity of style; as his judgment informed him that manners in Tragedy would admit a stronger colouring than in the Epos, because there every thing speaks to the eye and the heart, so he gave it at once an higher tone and greater pomp of diction; this *perhaps* he has carried to an excess; his epithets are sometimes harsh and turgid, and by endeavouring always to support an elevation of style he has rendered it what P. Brumoy well expresses by "quelquefois "gigantesque." But this is to be understood only of his diction: his images, with all their magnificence, never overstep the modesty of nature; they are indeed conceived with that inimitable fire, and expressed with such a daring sublimity, that it requires no small portion of the high poetic spirit to attend him through his boundless flights; and this is one principal reason of that obscurity which is complained of in his choral Odes: but to assert from hence that his figures often obscure his sense rather than enlighten it, is to speak the language of tasteless criticism, that meditates its frigid lucubrations over the midnight lamp, leaving true ge-

nius, like the eagle, to soar undazzled by the blazing sun when he "glows with unmitigated day."

We have lately been told that if we consider the state of the Drama, when Æschylus undertook to reform and improve it, we shall behold him with admiration; if we compare him with his two illustrious successors, he hides his diminished head, and appears far less conspicuous. But this judgment was unknown to ancient Greece: the state of Athens paid honours to Æschylus, which never were granted to any other poet: Aristophanes, who certainly was not deficient in taste, gave the preference to Æschylus: and Lycurgus, to whom the poetic world is so greatly indebted, erected statues alike to Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, and ordered their tragedies to be transcribed and preserved together. In pronouncing on their comparative merit, the best critics assign to Æschylus the high tragic dignity, to Sophocles harmonious elegance, to Euripides the moral and pathetic. As the temper of the times must always have a great influence on the genius of their poets, we may in some measure account for this difference of character from the different state of Athens in the periods when these three great writers composed their tragedies; for though they were cotemporaries, that is, were all alive at the same time, yet the circumstances of the public had in that short time received a very considerable change. Whilst Æs-

chylus was in the vigour of his age, the generous glow of liberty and the high martial spirit blazed out with the brightest ardour; it was successful; and Athens was the proud scene of conquests, glories, triumphs, spoils: Æschylus had borne an active and honourable part in these great engagements; his genius was naturally sublime and daring; the spirit of the times called forth the spirit of the poet, was highly flattered by it, and in return received it with the greatest pleasure and warmest applause.—The penetrating writer before cited in apologizing for the irregularities of Shakespear, has this fine remark, "If perfect and faultless composition is "ever to be expected from human faculties, it must "be at some happy period when a noble and "graceful simplicity, the result of well regulated "and sober magnanimity, reigns through the gene-"ral manners. Then the Muses and the Arts, "neither effeminately delicate, nor audaciously "bold, assume their highest character, and in all "their compositions seem to respect the chastity "of the public taste, which would equally disdain "quaintness of ornament, or the rude neglect "of elegance and decorum. Such periods had "Greece!" And such was the precise period in which Sophocles wrote: the high national spirit had as yet suffered no abatement; but the war had now nothing dangerous or peculiarly interesting in it: and Athens was at leisure to cultivate the fine arts with a greater degree of exactness, and to give

them a polish and perfection unknown to more busy and tumultuous times: hence the correct and elegant Sophocles. The Athenians had now an opportunity in the calm of peace to enjoy the riches which they had acquired in the Persian war; nor were they of a disposition to neglect the enjoyment: this of course brought on a greater refinement of taste, and a softer delicacy of sentiment; but the ancient simplicity of manners was not yet corrupted; it only became more elegant, and formed the pathetic Euripides, the greatest master of the tender passions: and happily for the cause of virtue the chaste and philosophic friend of Socrates might well be trusted with his empire over them. If then the glorious scenes of war and conquest were peculiarly favourable to the bold and fiery genius of Æschylus, "the period, when Sophocles "and Euripides wrote, was that in which the fine "arts and polite literature were in a degree of per-"fection, which succeeding ages have emulated in "vain," till an amiable writer of our own, by an happy effort of "heaven-born genius," regulated by the most chastised judgment, united the powers of the three illustrious Grecians, and has charmed us with the tenderness of Euripides in Elfrida, with the force of Æschylus, and the correctness and harmony of Sophocles in Caractacus, adding from his own stores a richness and a grace with which the severity of the Athenian Drama was unacquainted.

Notwithstanding the acknowledged merit of this truly original writer, he seems to have been little studied even by the learned of these later ages: of all our other poets Milton and Mr. Gray are the only two that have imitated his manner, and caught the fire of his genius; unless we may add to them our sublime Collins. A minute examination of the particular images, which these noble writers may seem to have glanced at in Æschylus, would be equally uncandid and invidious; it is more agreeable and more just to observe, that from whatever sparks they kindled "the Muses' Vestal Fires," they had genius of their own to "fan them to that "dazzling blaze of song," which must always make them the glory of English Poetry.

Those who are best acquainted with Æschylus in the original language, will be most sensible of the difficulties of presenting him properly to the English reader; the Translator saw and felt them enough. In a language, that has so long ceased to be spoken, many peculiar elegances must escape even those that read it with the greatest accuracy; and many of those, which are observed, will necessarily lose the richness of their colouring, when copied into another language: and this must always be the case where the whole beauty depends upon the choice and arrangement of words and syllables constituting an inimitable harmony of expression. "Un tour en toute langue (says the ex-

" cellent Brumoy) vaut souvent une pensée, et en " est véritablement une. Mais c'est une mâne " qui fond, une phantôm qui s' évanoüit, ou du " moins une fleur qui se fanne dans une langue " étrangere." There are many instances of this in the choral Odes: these too are often so difficult, that the Translator cannot flatter himself that he has always reached the precise meaning of the original, though directed by the penetrating sagacity of the very learned Pauw, to whom he most gratefully acknowledges the highest obligations: and, what is particularly to be lamented, even these small remains of Æschylus have come down to us so injured by the depredations of time, that in many passages the happiest conjecture is the best criticism. Yet the Translator was not discouraged: he had an ambition to present this noble author to the English reader, and flattered himself that his attempt would be acceptable to the public: animated with this pleasing hope he undertook and went through the arduous work; but when he reflects upon the generous encouragement he has met with from so many persons of the highest rank, as well as of the first reputation in literature, he thinks it the truest mark of respect, and the best thanks for the honour they have done him, to assure them that he trembles whilst he publishes what he wrote with ardour; trembles lest the translation should be false to his own wishes, and unworthy of their patronage: his wishes are to please; and in a

work of such difficulty there is some degree of merit even in the attempt; and this is all he presumes to claim. Should he however be so happy as to succeed, and be thought to deserve the approbation of the public, to which he now with the greatest diffidence appeals, this will animate him with the most sanguine hope of further success in the long promised translation of Euripides; to that he now returns. If an apology for these studies be necessary in respect to his years and profession, he begs leave to make it in the words of Tully, "Ego vero fateor, me his studiis esse deditum. "Ceteros pudeat, siqui ita se litteris abdiderunt, "ut nihil possint ex his neque ad communem af- "ferre fructum, neque in aspectum lucemque "proferre. Me autem quid pudeat, qui tot annos "ita vivo, ut ab nullius unquam me tempore aut "commodum, aut otium meum abstraxerit, aut "Voluptas avocarit, aut denique Somnus retarda- "rit? Quare quis tandem me reprehendat, aut "quis mihi jure succenseat, si, quantum ceteris ad "suas res obeundas, quantum ad festos dies ludo- "rum celebrandos, quantum ad alias Voluptates, "et ad ipsam requiem animi et corporis conceditur "temporum: quantum alii tribuunt tempestivis "conviviis: quantum denique aleæ, quantum pilæ; "tantum mihi egomet ad hæc studia recolenda "sumpsero?"—Pro Archia Poeta.

Scarning,
September 8, 1777.

TO

MRS. MONTAGU.

MADAM,

WHEN you first expressed to me your desire, that notes explanatory of the ancient mythology, history, and customs, might be added to the translation of Æschylus, it surprised me that you, who certainly want notes as little as any person alive, should be the first to ask for them; and I wished to be excused from the task, as conscious to myself that, though I might be so happy as to entertain the Public, I could have no pretensions to instruct it, not presuming to think, that I know more than every one knows, or at least ought to know: your politeness would not admit my plea, but you persevered in your request; I might more properly call it your command, for as such I shall always receive even an hint from Mrs. Montagu. In consequence of this, I have now the honour of present-

ing to you such remarks, as occurred to me upon a careful review of my author; these may possibly be of service to the less informed reader, and for such notes in general, and even translations, are principally intended: thus far all may be well; but *your* expectations must be disappointed; for such writing is not in its nature amusing, and you want no information which the writer is capable of giving.

I know your active mind wishes to penetrate through the allegorical covering, which the philosophers, poets, and priests of ancient times threw over their physical, moral, and theological inquiries; but the boast of Isis yet remains, and no mortal hath removed her veil. The misfortune is, almost all the monuments of Egyptian learning are lost, and of the Egyptian Gods nothing remains but fable: the light, which we receive upon these subjects, is chiefly derived from the Greek writers, and this by no means pure; they were indeed enough acquainted with Egypt to acquire from thence a turn for mythologizing, but we may observe, that it did not always sit easy upon them; ill instructed in the antiquities of their own country, they have transmitted to us a confused heap of uncertain traditions; and these, by falling into the hands of the poets, are become still more extravagant; the consequence of which is, they have

multiplied doubts, to which one would willingly prefer the most profound ignorance. You would be the more convinced of the justness and good sense of this observation of the learned and excellent M. le Count Caylus, could you bear to read the celebrated treatise of Plutarch concerning Isis and Osiris, where you would find such a mixture of history and fable, allegory and explication, reasoning and absurdity, as would deter you from further inquiry; yet Plutarch was one of the most learned and inquisitive persons of his age, and in these researches he had means of information, which we can never have. Yet for our times these discoveries seem to have been reserved; we have writers on mythology in abundance; and though they differ in their explications, yet they agree in an unclassical disregard to antiquity and truth, and in a barbarous attempt to demolish all the monuments of Egypt and Greece, and with their materials some to repair the temple of Jerusalem, some to build up systems of their own; these indeed are un peu bizarres, and what one of them says of the others, we may with equal reason apply to them all, "On cherche quelque lumière, et l'on ne voit "qu' amas indigeste d'une vaste érudition et l'abus "le plus étrange des Langues, que l'on honora "faussement du nom de Science étymologique."

And would you have me venture to tread this

treacherous soil of mythology? Or have you a wish to see me pictured, like that great Mystagogue, Alexander Ross, in the temple of Apollo, my pontifical robe trailing on the pavement, my philosophical beard waving over my breast, my front ploughed with many a deep remark, and a great church-door key in my hand, which after all opens to no knowledge?

But since, notwithstanding my nolo episcopari, you have called me forth to the office of Hierophant, I must enter upon it by declaring, that whoever he be that wishes to give, or to form any rational idea of the mythology of the ancients, he must first acquaint himself with the religion of the earliest ages, its progressive corruption through the three greater species of idolatry, and their mode of representing things by hieroglyphic characters; for from hence arose this marvellous entassement of mythology, symbol, and allegory.

Religion is natural to the human mind, and when the early ages had sunk to that miserable blindness as to lose sight of the true God, who revealed himself to their first progenitor, they looked up to the Heavens, and struck with admiration of the nature of the universe, supposed the Sun and Moon to be the eternal and first Gods. The voice of antiquity is uniform in this; the earliest

account we have is from the Fragment of Sanchoniatho, which tells us, that * Æon and Protogonus in times of drought stretched their hands to the Heavens towards the Sun; for this they esteemed as God the sole lord of the Heaven. As Diodorus Siculus tells us the same thing of the Egyptians, so Herodotus gives us a similar account of the ancient † Persians and Libyans; this Hyde calls the first interpolation: and Plato ‡ says, that the earliest Grecians worshipped the Sun, and the Moon, and the Earth, and the Stars, and the Heaven, as many barbarians do now. Thus elementary worship was the first species of idolatry.

When men were drawn from a savage life to the more civilized state of society, those virtues

(Or in arts, or arms
Diffusing blessings, or averting harms,)

which had made a prince the father of his people, induced them out of gratitude and reverence to deify him after his decease, and to pay him divine honours: thus Sanchoniatho tells us, that ‖ when

* Αἰῶνα καὶ Πρωτόγονον αὐχμῶν γενομένων τὰς χεῖρας ὀρέγειν εἰς οὐρανοὺς πρὸς τὸν ἥλιον. τοῦτον γάρ, φησι, θεὸν ἐνόμιζον μόνον οὐρανοῦ κύριον.

† Θύουσι δὲ Ἡλίῳ καὶ Σελήνῃ μούνοισι· τούτοισι μὲν νῦν πάντες Λίβυες θύουσι.—L. iv. c. 188.

‡ In Cratylo.

‖ Ὕψιστος ἐκ συμβολῆς θηρίων τελευτήσας ἀφιερώθη, ᾧ καὶ θοὰς καὶ θυσίας οἱ παῖδες ἐτελέσαν.

Hypsistus was killed by wild beasts, he was deified, and his children made libations and sacrifices to him. And in what other sense can we understand Hesiod, when he speaks of the sacred race of the immortal Gods *, which were born of the Earth; and of the Earth as producing the Heaven, that it might be the seat of the immortal Gods? Tully in the first book of his Tusculan Disputations, arguing for the existence of the soul after death, proves from the pontifical law, and the inviolable ceremonies of sepulture, that death is not a privation of being, but a migration of life, which leads illustrious persons to the skies; he instances in Romulus, and says, that Rome derived this opinion from Greece; that not only Hercules, Bacchus, Castor, and Pollux, Leucothea, and their own Matuta, but that even the Dii majorum gentium would be found, by tracing the antiquities of Greece, to have been advanced from mortals to be Gods. Yet M. Court de Gebelin could assure us, that antiquity never deified dead men. "On a pretendu qu'ils avoient etabli pour faire voir que ces Dieux étoient tous des hommes qui avoient été déifiés à cause des services qu'ils avoient rendus au genre humain. Mais il faudroit pour que cela pût être adopté, qu'on en trouvât

* Κλείετε δ' ἀθανάτων ἱερὸν γένος αἰὲν ἐόντων,
Οἳ Γῆς ἐξεγένοντο.—V. 105.

Γαῖα δέ τοι πρῶτον μὲν ἐγείνατο ἶσον ἑαυτῇ
Οὐρανὸν ἀστερόεντ', ἵνα μιν περὶ πάντα καλύπτοι,
Ὄφρ' εἴη μακάρεσσι θεοῖς ἕδος ἀσφαλὲς αἰεί.—V. 126.

de preuves dans l'Antiquité, ce qui est impossible, l'Antiquité n' ayant jamais déïfié des hommes."—Monde Primitif, p. 311.—Whatever antiquity has done in this case, his system required that it should not have done it; and what can stand before a system?

Yon' golden sun blazing in all its splendor, the silver regent of the night, the canopy of Heaven spangled with stars, the violence of the winds, the immensity of the ocean, might astonish the minds of untutored barbarians: and if one should be inclined to forgive them for adoring the thundering Jupiter, the majestic Juno, the elegant Apollo, the accomplished Minerva, the beautiful Venus, the Muses and the Graces, and such other of their deities as showed their fine taste at least, if not their good sense; yet what shall we say to their Divine Bull, their Divine Heifer, their dog-headed Anubis, and all that herd of monsters which disgraced the religion of Egypt? Yet such was the depravation of the human mind, that having lost its sense of the true God, it first fixed on elementary worship, then descended to human, and at last sunk to brutal; though, in justice to the inventors of this third species of idolatry, we must observe, that the animal itself was not originally worshipped, but its figure as symbolical of the other two species. This certainly took its rise from the Egyptian hieroglyphics, which were prior to alphabetic writing,

and represented one thing by another : thus horns were the symbol of power ; hence * Hermes placed on the head of Isis an helmet formed with the horns of a Bull : and an heifer being in Egypt the well-known symbol of Fertility, this their tutelary Goddess is represented sometimes as a most beautiful woman with the horns of an heifer, sometimes with the head of an heifer, and sometimes entirely as an heifer. Hence the Iö of the Grecians.

But a practice, which naturally enough took its rise from this mode of representation, was afterwards encouraged by the priests with a different view : as mankind grew more inquisitive and more enlightened, they had reason to fear, that the origin of their hero gods might be detected, which would of course greatly weaken the veneration in which they were held, and have a tendency to subvert the public religion ; but the symbolic worship, by adding mystery to their theology, and keeping the truth out of sight, would at least support, if not increase the veneration ; therefore the more impenetrable the obscurity was made, the better would its end be answered.

This end was likewise effected, and the people were more easily reconciled to hero-worship by another method, which led them to support the

* Ἑρμῆν δὲ περιθεῖναι βούκερανον αὐτῇ (Ἴσιδι) κράνος. De Iside et Osiride.

new idolatry on the old, by giving the deified mortal the name of the planet, and inversely by giving the planet the name of the new god; thus Osiris was the Sun, and the Sun was Osiris. So Sanchoniatho tells us, that Chronus*, *i. e.* Saturn, after his decease, was hallowed into the planet of Saturn; and Plutarch says, that the Egyptian priests affirm that the bodies of the Gods †, such as were not of immortal origin and incorruptible, were deposited with them; but that their souls shined stars in the Heaven; some therefore expressly say, that Osiris was the Sun, by the Greeks called Sirius; and that Isis was the Moon, represented under both characters by the same image; that her horns were resemblances of the Moon, and that she was habited in a black stole, to denote her occultations, in which she wanders seeking the Sun. I have somewhere seen an image of this Goddess, on which the horns are perfectly lunar, and so formed, that the blank disc of the moon is faintly shadowed within their circle.

* Κρόνος—εἰς τὸν τοῦ Κρόνου ἀστέρα καθιερωθείς.

† Οἱ δὲ ἱερεῖς λέγουσι τὰ τῶν θεῶν, ὅσοι μὴ ἀγέννητοι μηδὲ ἄφθαρτοι, σώματα μὲν αὐτοῖς κεῖσθαι καμόντα καὶ θεραπεύεσθαι, τὰς δὲ ψυχὰς ἐν οὐρανῷ λάμπειν ἄστρα.—Εἰσὶ δὲ οἳ τὸν Ὄσιριν ἀντίκρυς ἥλιον εἶναι καὶ ὀνομάζεσθαι Σείριον ὑφ' Ἑλλήνων λέγοντες· τὴν δ' Ἶσιν οὐχ ἑτέραν τῆς σελήνης ἀποφαίνοντες, ἐν γὰρ τῶν ἀγαλμάτων αὐτῆς, τὰ μὲν κεράσφορα τοῦ μηνοειδοῦς γεγονέναι μιμήματα, τοῖς δὲ μελανοστόλοις ἐμφαίνουσι τὰς κρύψεις καὶ τοὺς περισκιασμούς, ἐν οἷς δύεται πορθοῦσα τὸν ἥλιον.—De Iside et Osiride.

And now, Madam, your Hierophant having presumed to conduct you through these probationary labours,

> Obscure thro' dreary shades, that lead
> Along the waste dominions of the dead:
> As wander travellers in woods by night,
> By the moon's doubtful and malignant light;
> When Jove in dusky clouds involves the skies,
> And the faint crescent shoots by fits before their eyes.
>
> Æn. vi. DRYDEN.

You are prepared to enter the mystic dome, where, I hope, you will not be alarmed at the various monsters that present themselves before you; they are empty phantoms all,

> Forms without bodies and impassive air.

Neither will you wonder to find them here: every thing is in its proper order. As the human mind advanced in knowledge, these symbolical representations were too gross to pass upon the inquisitive as proper objects of their religious adoration; the priests therefore, who were now deeply interested in the craft, and the vanity of philosophizing, attempted to cover the absurdity of these brute-figured deities, by pretending that they were mythological allegories, which veiled all the great truths of theology, ethics, and physics. Thus Sanchoniatho, who had told us, that Taaut, the Egyptian Hermes, imitating Ouranus, formed the figures of the Gods in sacred characters (where we find

this deity the patron rather of the ingenious Carlini and the goddess-making Reynolds, than of Poor Robin and Vincent Wing), tells us also *, that the son of Thabion, the earliest Phœnician Hierophant, allegorized all these things, and mixed them with physical and elementary ideas. In this state they passed to the Grecians, whose volatile and inventive genius, added fable to mythology, and extravagance to allegory, till, as Mr. Bryant expresses it, "we find the whole, like a grotesque picture, "blazoned high, and glaring with colours, and filled "with groups of fantastic imagery, such as we see "upon an Indian screen; where the eye is pain-"fully amused; but whence little can be obtained, "which is satisfactory, and of service." To endeavour to analyse them, "c'étoit employer beau-"coup trop d'erudition pour s'égarer." Let us make the attempt on Prometheus, and we shall soon see that M. Court de Gebelin had reason enough to make this reflection.

The English reader is now well acquainted with the history and character of Prometheus: Æschylus indeed had the good sense to omit the silly tale of the bull's hide and the bones; and Plato in his Protagoras, has told his story in the most agreeable

* Θεὸς Τάαυτος, μιμησάμενος τὸν Οὐρανὸν, τῶν θεῶν ὄψεις, Κρόνου τὲ καὶ Δαιγῶνος, καὶ τῶν λοιπῶν διετύπωσεν τοὺς ἱεροὺς τῶν στοιχείων χαρακτῆρας.—— Ταῦτα πάντα ὁ Θαβίωνος παῖς πρῶτος τῶν ἀπ' αἰῶνος γεγονότων Φοινίκων ἱεροφάντης ἀλληγορήσας, τοῖς τε φυσικοῖς καὶ κοσμικοῖς πάθεσιν ἀναμίξας.

manner: but where in history sacred or profane, where in religion or in nature shall we find this worthy? Shall we draw him out of Noah's Ark? Shall we yoke him to the plough in Egypt, thence send him to a mountain to escape the inundation of the Nile, which overspread his province rapid as an *Eagle's* flight, in despair, till Hercules repaired the ravages, and taught the river to confine itself to its channel? Shall we find him on Mount Horeb in the person of Moses? Or shall we take up with any one, or with all the fourteen interpretations of Alexander Ross? The civilizing, oneirocritic, and medicinal arts, which he boasts to have taught mankind, show him to have been an Egyptian, they fix him to the age of Osiris, they even mark him to be Osiris himself; for he was the wise and benevolent civilizer*, he reclaimed his Egyptians from their poor and savage life, he instructed them in agriculture, gave them laws, and taught them to honour the Gods. But his name, as well as that of his inconsiderate brother, is purely Greek; and probably he owes his civilizing qualities to the vanity of that people, who had a wonderful propensity to claim to themselves the invention of all the arts of polished life. Had we nothing of his story, but what is so elegantly related by Plato, we should not hesitate to pro-

* Βασιλεύοντα δὲ Ὄσιριν Αἰγυπτίους μὲν εὐθὺς ἀπόρου βίου καὶ θηριώδους ἀπαλλάξαι, κάρπουν τὲ δείξαντα, καὶ νόμους θέμενον αὐτοῖς, καὶ θέους δείξαντα τιμᾷν.—Plutarch de Is. et Osir.

nounce him an emblem of the Divine Providence in the formation of man; and as such we must accept it, little doubting but that his chains, and the eagle preying on his heart, were wild and extravagant fables superadded to the original sober allegory. No uncommon practice this. Mr. Bryant well accounts for this, when he says, "The history "of Prometheus was certainly taken from hiero- "glyphics misunderstood, and badly explained, at "least from the sacred devices upon the entabla- "tures of temples. Prometheus was worshipped "by the Colchians as a deity; and had a temple "and high place called Typhæonia Petra upon "Mount Caucasus; the device upon the portal "was Egyptian, an Eagle over an Heart; the "Eagle and the Vulture were the insignia of that "country."—The Heart was another hieroglyphical character.—It were to be wished, that this very ingenious and learned gentleman had favoured us with his authority for this interesting circumstance; it would have been more satisfactory to his readers, though his fidelity cannot be suspected: it were also to be wished, that he had stopped here; for beyond this we have no support from antiquity; neither reason nor religion can account for a story so inconsistent with both; and of conjectures we have enough. But the spirit of mythologizing is gone forth, and all flesh is humbled in its sight; gods and men, heaven and earth, the air and the

sea, theology, physics, and ethics, and all the monuments of antiquity fall before it;

The lonely mountains o'er,
And the resounding shore,
A voice of weeping heard, and loud lament;
From haunted spring and dale,
Edged with poplar pale,
The parting genius is with sighing sent;
With flow'r-inwoven tresses torn
The Nymphs in twilight shade of tangled thickets mourn,&c.

I promised that I would introduce the daughter of Inachus to your acquaintance; and if I have been so happy as to explain this one mythological character, it has been by a sober attention to antiquity, under the guidance of a right reverend author, whose comprehensive genius has fathomed all the depths of literature. Could I have found any further support from antiquity, any rational ground on which to follow my inquiries, I should have been equally happy to have been able to give you satisfaction with regard to the other mysterious personages mentioned by Æschylus: instead of this you will give me leave to put you off with a story.

As Socrates one evening was walking with his friend Phædrus on the banks of the Ilyssus, the young man asked whether that was the place whence Boreas was said to have carried off the virgin Orithyia: being shown the place a little lower down the stream, where an altar to Boreas yet stood, he

says, But tell me, I conjure you, Socrates, are you persuaded that this mythological narration is true? If I should disbelieve it, as wise men do, the philosopher replies, I should not be guilty of any great absurdity; then I should show my acuteness, and say that the violence of the north-wind drove her down those rocks as she was playing with Pharmacia, and that, perishing there, she was said to have been carried away by Boreas. Those things, my Phædrus, on some accounts, I think agreeable, but they are the inquiries of a studious, laborious man, and of one not perfectly happy; if for no other reason, yet for this, that he would then be under a necessity of adjusting the form of the Centaurs, and next of the Chimæra; then flows in a multitude of Gorgons and Pegasus's, and such like beings, inexplicable for their numbers, and monstrous in their absurdity. If any one, who has no faith in these, should attempt to give a solution of each form, though in no elegant manner, he would find it a work that requires much leisure. But I have no leisure for such things: the reason, my friend, is this; I am not yet able, according to the Delphic injunction, to know myself; and it would be ridiculous for me, whilst I am ignorant of this, to be investigating things foreign to my own business and bosom. Wherefore, bidding farewell to these things, and submitting to what is determined concerning them, I consider what I lately mentioned, not such subjects, but myself, whether I am a monster more

multiform and more fiery fierce than Typhon, or a tamer and more simple animal, in my nature partaking of some divine and gentle portion.—PLATO'S PHÆDRUS.

Socrates tells us, that these inquiries are not the task of a very happy man: the Athenian philosopher had his reason for saying this, but they affect not us: I should be very happy if my inquiries could produce any thing worthy your attention, the study and the labour I should think well employed. And now, Madam, you see how little you are to expect from these notes; yet such as they are, as they were written by your command, to you they are dedicated; as your candour has induced you to approve the translation, I can with the better grace presume to dedicate that also to you: the approbation of Mrs. Montagu is the highest honour any writer can receive; I am not insensible to it; and whilst I thus boast of it to the Public, let me express my humblest thanks to you for it.

I am, Madam, with the greatest respect,

Your most obedient servant,

R. POTTER.

SCARNING,
11*th July*, 1778.

PROMETHEUS CHAIN'D.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

STRENGTH AND FORCE.

VULCAN.

PROMETHEUS.

OCEANUS.

IO.

MERCURY.

CHORUS.

NYMPHS OF THE OCEAN.

PROMETHEUS CHAIN'D.

ÆSCHYLUS wrote three Tragedies on the story of Prometheus: the first exhibited him as carrying the sacred gift of fire to men; the second as chained to Caucasus; the third as delivered from his chains. Of these the second only remains to us. The short account, which Prometheus gives in this of the barbarous state of man before he taught them the civilizing arts, makes us regret the loss of the first; and we have good reason to imagine that the portrait of Hercules in the third, delineated by this great master, must have been inimitable. There is in this remaining drama a sublimity of conception, a strength, a fire, a certain savage dignity peculiar to this bold writer. The scenery is the greatest that the human imagination ever formed: the wild and desolate rock frowning over the sea, the stern and imperious sons of Pallas and Styx holding up Prometheus to its rifted side whilst Vulcan fixes his chains, the Nymphs of the Ocean flying to its summit to commiserate his un-

happy state, old Oceanus on his hippogriff, the appearance of Iö, the descent of Mercury, the whirlwind tearing up the sands, swelling the boisterous sea, and dashing its waves to the stars, the vollied thunders rolling all their fiery rage against the rock, and the figure of Prometheus unappalled at this terrible storm, and bidding defiance to Jupiter, would require the utmost effort of Salvator Rosa's genius to represent them. Yet is the horrid greatness of this drama tempered with much tenderness; the reluctance of Vulcan to execute the severe commands of Jupiter is finely contrasted to the eager unfeeling insolence of Strength and Force; the character of Iö is mournfully gentle; and the Oceanitidæ are of a most amiable mildness joined to a firm but modest prudence; even the untameable ferocity of Prometheus discovers under it a benevolence that interests us deeply in his sufferings.

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PROMETHEUS CHAIN'D.

STRENGTH, FORCE, VULCAN, PROMETHEUS *.

STR. AT length then to the wide earth's extreme bounds,
To Scythia are we come, those pathless wilds
Where human footstep never mark'd the ground.
Now, Vulcan, to thy task; at Jove's command
Fix to these high-projecting rocks this vain
Artificer of man; each massy link
Draw close, and bind his adamantine chains.
The radiant pride, the fiery flame, that lends
Its aid to ev'ry art, he stole, and bore
The gift to mortals; for which bold offence
The gods assign him this just punishment;

* According to the theogony of Hesiod, Chaos was the ancestor of Nature; next to him was Gaia: her progeny by Ouranus was numerous, amongst these were Oceanus and Japetus: by Clymene, daughter of Oceanus, Japetus was the father of Prometheus, with whose history the Athenians were well acquainted from the narrative of Hesiod, which was, we may suppose, the popular creed of the times in which our poet wrote. The English reader is by this time as well acquainted with this strange story.

STRENGTH AND FORCE.

These two allegorical personages were of high antiquity and illustrious birth, the sons of Pallas and Styx. Cœus, the son of Ouranus and Gaia,

That he may learn to reverence the pow'r
Of Jove, and moderate his love to man.

VULC. Stern pow'rs, your harsh commands have here an end,
Nor find resistance. My less hardy mind,
Averse to violence, shrinks back, and dreads
To bind a kindred god to this wild cliff,
Expos'd to ev'ry storm: but strong constraint
Compels me; I must steel my soul, and dare:
Jove's high commands require a prompt observance.
High-thoughted son of truth-directing Themis*,
Thee with indissoluble chains, perforce,
Must I now rivet to this savage rock,
Where neither human voice, nor human form
Shall meet thine eye, but parching in the beams,
Unshelter'd, of yon' fervid sun, thy bloom
Shall lose its grace, and make thee wish th' approach
Of grateful evening mild, whose dusky stole
Spangled with gems shall veil his fiery heat;
And night upon the whitening ground breathe frore,
But soon to melt, touch'd by his orient ray.
So shall some present ill with varied pain
Afflict thee; nor is he yet born, whose hand
Shall set thee free: thus thy humanity

was the father of Pallas by Eurybia, daughter of Pontus and Gaia: Styx was the daughter of Oceanus and Tethys. When Jupiter assembled the gods on Olympus, and declared his gracious intention to reward and honour each that should be auxiliary to him in his wars against the Titans, Styx, by the advice of her father, was the first that attended him, leading with her these her two sons; Jupiter received her with great respect, appointed her to be the sacred oath of the gods, and admitted her sons to be constant attendants on his own person. Hesiod. Theog. v. 400.

* Themis was one of the most ancient and respectable deities, the daughter of Ouranus and Gaia, that is of Heaven and Earth. As she was the second prophetic power that held her oracular seat at Delphos, she was honoured as the goddess of Truth and Justice.

Receives its meed, that thou, a god, regardless
Of the gods' anger, honouredst mortal man
With courtesies, which justice not approves.
Therefore the joyless station of this rock
Unsleeping, unreclining, shalt thou keep,
And many' a groan, many' a loud lament
Throw out in vain, nor move the rig'rous breast
Of Jove, relentless in his youthful pow'r.

STR. No more: why these delays, this foolish pity?
Dost thou not hate a god by gods abhorr'd,
That prostitutes thy radiant boast to man?

VULC. Strong are the ties of kindred and long converse.

STR. Well: but to disobey thy sire's commands,
Darest thou do that? Is not that fear more strong?

VULC. Soft pity never touch'd thy ruthless mind.

STR. Will thy vain pity bring relief? Forbear,
Nor waste thyself in what avails not him.

VULC. Abhorr'd be all the fine skill of my hands.

STR. And why abhorr'd? For of these present toils
Thy art, in very truth, is not the cause.

VULC. Yet wish I it had been some other's lot.

STR. All have their lot appointed, save to reign
In heav'n, for liberty is Jove's alone.

VULC. Truth guides thy words, nor have I to gainsay.

STR. Why thus reluctant then to bind his chains?
Let not thy sire observe these slow delays.

VULC. The manacles are ready, thou mayst see them.

STR. Bind them around his hands; with all thy force
Strike, nail them fast, drive them into the rock.

VULC. Thus far the work is finish'd, and not slightly.

STR. Strike harder, strain them, let them not relax;
His craft will work unthought of ways t' escape.

VULC. This arm too is inextricably fix'd.

STR. And now clasp this secure, that he may learn

How impotent his craft, oppos'd to Jove.

VULC. This work he only can with justice blame.

STR. Across his breast draw now this stubborn bar
Of adamant, fix firm its sharpen'd point.

VULC. Thy miseries, Prometheus, I bewail.

STR. Still dost thou linger? Still bewail the foes
Of Jove? Take heed lest thou bewail thyself.

VULC. Thou seest an object horrible to sight.

STR. I see him honour'd as his deeds deserve.
But haste thee, fix this strong habergeon on him.

VULC. Constraint lies on me; urge not thou its rigour.

STR. Urge thee? I will, and in an higher tone.
Downwards; with all thy force enring his legs.

VULC. This too is finish'd, with no ling'ring speed.

STR. Strike hard, drive deep their penetrating points.
Severe his eye, who nicely scans these works.

VULC. Thy voice is harsh, and rugged as thy form.

STR. Now fair befal thy softness; yet upbraid not
My ruder and unpitying ruthlessness.

VULC. Let us be gone: the rig'rous task is done.

STR. Now triumph in thy insolence; now steal
The glory of the gods, and bear the gift
To mortal man: will they relieve thee now?
False is the boasted prudence of thy name,
Or wanted now to free thee from thy fate.

PROM. Ethereal air, and ye swift-winged winds, [*alone**

* No writer knew better how to preserve propriety of character than Æschylus. Prometheus disdained to answer the ferocious insolence of these ministers of Jupiter, nor could even the tender commiseration of Vulcan elicit a word from him. There is a dignity, and even a sublimity in this silence beyond the expression of words. But as soon as the instruments of tyranny left him, he bursts into a strain of pathetic lamentation and invokes all nature to attest his undeserved sufferings. There is a further propriety in this address; the Winds were the sons of Nereus and Doris, the Rivers of Oceanus and Tethys, the Sun of Hyperion and Thea, whose parents were

Ye rivers springing from fresh founts, ye waves *,
That o'er th' interminable ocean wreath
Your crisped smiles, thou all-producing earth,
And thee, bright sun, I call, whose flaming orb
Views the wide world beneath, see what, a god,
I suffer from the gods; with what fierce pains,
Behold, what tortures for revolving ages
I here must struggle; such unseemly chains
This new-rais'd ruler of the gods devis'd.
Ah me! That groan bursts from my anguish'd heart,
My present woes and future to bemoan.
When shall these suff'rings find their destin'd end?
But why that vain inquiry? My clear sight
Looks through the future; unforeseen no ill
Shall come on me: behoves me then to bear
Patient my destin'd fate, knowing how vain
To struggle with necessity's strong pow'r.
But to complain, or not complain, alike
Is unavailable. For favours shown
To mortal man I bear this weight of woe;
Hid in an hollow cane the fount of fire
I privately convey'd, of ev'ry art
Productive, and the noblest gift to men.
And for this slight offence, woe, woe is me!
I bear these chains, fix'd to this savage rock,
Unsheltered from the inclemencies of th' air.
Ah me! what sound, what softly-breathing odour †

Ouranus and Gaia: these were all kindred gods, benevolent to Prometheus, and deeply affected with his miseries.

* Refertur ad levem sonum undarum ventis exagitatarum, qui etiam aliquando crispant maris dorsum quasi amabili quâdam γιλαριτι.-*Stanley.* The image is here so beautifully poetical, that the translator could not give it up for the cool correction of Pauw.

† This softly-breathing odour marks the approach of some divinity.

Steals on my sense? Be you immortal gods,
Or mortal men, or of th' heroic race,
Whoe'er have reach'd this wild rock's extreme cliff,
Spectators of my woes, or what your purpose,
Ye see me bound, a wretched god, abhorr'd
By Jove, and ev'ry god that treads his courts,
For my fond love to man. Ah me! again
I hear the sound of flutt'ring nigh; the air
Pants to the soft beat of light-moving wings:
All, that approaches now, is dreadful to me.

PROMETHEUS, CHORUS.

CHOR. Forbear thy fears: a friendly train*
On busy pennons flutt'ring light,
We come, our sire not ask'd in vain,
And reach this promontory's height.
The clanging iron's horrid sound
Re-echo'd thro' our caves profound;

When Juno, in the fourteenth Iliad, retires to her apartment to dress with more than ordinary care,

Here first she bathes, and round her body pours,
Soft oil of fragrance, and ambrosial show'rs:
The winds perfum'd the balmy gale convey
Thro' heav'n, thro' earth, and all th' aerial way;
Spirit divine! whose exhalation greets
The sense of gods with more than mortal sweets. POPE.

Thus Venus in the first Æneid discovers herself to Æneas,

Ambrosiæque comæ divinum vertice odorem
Spiravere.
Her waving locks immortal odours shed,
And breath'd ambrosial scents around her head. PITT.

*Æschylus with great judgment introduces these daughters of Oceanus as attending Prometheus; by their consanguinity they must be a friendly train. In the simplicity of ancient manners their father's consent must first be obtained; and even thus virgin modesty is something hurt. The Nymphs of the waters wore no sandals; hence Thetis is called the silver-footed, as Juno is the golden-slippered queen.

And tho' my cheek glows with shame's crimson dye,
Thus with un-sandall'd foot with winged speed I fly.

PROM. Ah me! Ah me!
Ye virgin sisters, who derive your race
From fruitful Thetis, and th' embrace
Of old Oceanus, your sire, that rolls
Around the wide world his unquiet waves,
This way turn your eyes, behold
With what a chain fix'd to this rugged steep
Th' unenvied station of the rock I keep.

CHOR. I see, I see; and o'er my eyes,
Surcharg'd with sorrow's tearful rain,
Darkning the misty clouds arise;
I see thy adamantine chain;
In its strong grasp thy limbs confin'd,
And withering in the parching wind:
Such the stern pow'r of heav'n's new-sceptred lord,
And law-controlling Jove's irrevocable word.

PROM. Beneath the earth,
Beneath the gulfs of Tartarus *, that spread
Interminable o'er the dead,
Had his stern fury fix'd this rigid chain,
Nor gods, nor men had triumph'd in my pain.
But pendent in th' ethereal air,
The pageant gratifies my ruthless foes,
That gaze, insult, and glory in my woes.

CHOR. Is there a god, whose sullen soul
Feels a stern joy in thy despair?
Owns he not pity's soft control,
And drops in sympathy the tear?

* Japetus had three sons, Menœtius, Prometheus, and Epimetheus. Menœtius, for his insolence and audacious attempts, was by Jupiter smitten with thunder, and cast into Tartarus, where the vanquished Titans were imprisoned. Hesiod.—To this Prometheus here alludes.

All, all, save Jove; with fury driv'n
Severe he tames the sons of heav'n;
And he will tame them, till some pow'r arise
To wrest from his strong hand the sceptre of the skies.

PROM. Yet he, e'en he,
That o'er the gods holds his despotic reign,
And fixes this disgraceful chain,
Shall need my aid, the counsels to disclose
Destructive to his honour and his throne.
But not the honied blandishment, that flows
From his alluring lips, shall ought avail;
His rigid menaces shall fail;
Nor will I make the fatal secret known,
Till his proud hands this galling chain unbind,
And his remorse sooths my indignant mind.

CHOR. Bold and intrepid is thy soul,
Fir'd with resentment's warmest glow;
And thy free voice disdains control,
Disdains the tort'ring curb of woe.
My softer bosom, thrill'd with fear
Lest heavier ills await thee here,
By milder counsels wishes thee repose:
For Jove's relentless rage no tender pity knows.

PROM. Stern tho' he be,
And, in the pride of pow'r terrific drest,
Rears o'er insulted right his crest,
Yet gentler thoughts shall mitigate his soul,
When o'er his head this storm shall roll;
Then shall his stubborn indignation bend,
Submit to sue, and court me for a friend.

CHOR. But say, relate at large for what offence
Committed doth the wrath of Jove inflict
This punishment so shameful, so severe:
Instruct us, if the tale shocks not thy soul.

FROM. 'Tis painful to relate it, to be silent
Is pain: each circumstance is full of woe *.
When stern debate amongst the gods appear'd,
And discord in the courts of heav'n was rous'd;
Whilst against Saturn some conspiring will'd
To pluck him from the throne, that Jove might reign;
And some, averse, with ardent zeal oppos'd
Jove's rising pow'r and empire o'er the gods;
My counsels, tho' discreetest, wisest, best,
Mov'd not the Titans, those impetuous sons
Of Ouranus and Terra, whose high spirits,
Disdaining milder measures, proudly ween'd
To seize by force the sceptre of the sky.
Oft did my goddess mother, Themis now,
Now Gaia, under various names design'd †,

* Gaia, offended with her husband Ouranus for having imprisoned the bravest of her sons, encouraged Saturn to revenge the affront, and armed him with a scythe of adamant, with which he dismembered his father, then seized his throne. But having heard a prophecy that he in his turn should be dethroned by one of his sons, to evade the completion of it, he swallowed down all his male offspring as soon as they were born, till at the birth of Jupiter, Rhea deceived him by a strange device, and privately conveyed the child to Crete, where he was educated, and concealed till he was of age to appear in arms against his father. As Saturn was the youngest son of Ouranus, the two eldest, Titanus and Japetus, claimed their hereditary honours, and opposed the sovereignty of Jupiter. The war had now continued ten years without intermission, and no prospect of a decision appeared, when Jupiter released Briareus, Cottus, and Gyges, the sons whom Saturn had imprisoned, and by feasting them with nectar and ambrosia, secured their fidelity: these were of immense courage, strength, and size, each had fifty heads and a hundred hands; by their assistance the Titans were totally defeated, and Jupiter acknowledged as the sovereign of the sky. Hesiod describes this battle with wonderful sublimity.

† A multiplicity of names was a mark of dignity; but Themis could not with propriety be called Gaia, this our poet mistook for Rhea. Gaia is the earth in its primitive uncultivated state, terra inculta; Rhea is the earth in its improved state of cultivation, tellus culta: and as from this culture, property arose, Justice had here her office to assign and protect this property,

Herself the same, foretell me the event,
That not by violence, that not by pow'r,
But gentler arts, the royalty of heav'n
Must be obtain'd. Whilst thus my voice advis'd,
Their headlong rage deign'd mē not e'en a look.
What then could wisdom dictate, but to take
My mother, and with voluntary aid
Abet the cause of Jove? Thus by my counsels
In the dark deep Tartarean gulph enclos'd
Old Saturn lies, and his confederate pow'rs.
For these good deeds the tyrant of the skies
Repays me with these dreadful punishments.
For foul mistrust of those that serve them best
Breathes its black poison in each tyrant's heart.
Ask you the cause for which he tortures me?
I will declare it. On his father's throne
Scarce was he seated, on the chiefs of heav'n
He show'r'd his various honours; thus confirming
His royalty; but for unhappy mortals *
Had no regard, and all the present race
Will'd to extirpate, and to form anew.
None, save myself, oppos'd his will; I dar'd;
And boldly pleading sav'd them from destruction,
Sav'd them from sinking to the realms of night.
For this offence I bend beneath these pains,
Dreadful to suffer, piteous to behold:

suum cuique: Themis therefore, as the goddess of Justice, might well have the appellation of Rhea. This is only to show that we understand the mythology of the ancients much better than they did themselves.

* We are not informed for what cause Jupiter was so offended with the unhappy race of mortals; but by way of punishment he withdrew from them παντέχνε πυρὸς σέλας, the fiery flame, that lends its aid to every art: this Prometheus stole from heaven, and reconveyed to them in an hollow cane: hinc illæ lacrymæ.

For mercy to mankind I am not deem'd
Worthy of mercy; but with ruthless hate
In this uncouth appointment am fix'd here
A spectacle dishonourable to Jove.

CHOR. Of iron is he form'd and adamant,
Whose breast with social sorrow does not melt
At thy afflictions: I nor wish'd to see them,
Nor see them but with anguish at my heart.

PROM. It is a sight that strikes my friends with pity.

CHOR. But had th' offence no further aggravation?

PROM. I hid from men the foresight of their fate.

CHOR. What cou'dst thou find to remedy that ill?

PROM. I sent blind Hope t' inhabit in their hearts.

CHOR. A blessing hast thou given to mortal man.

PROM. Nay more, with generous zeal I gave them Fire.

CHOR. Do mortals now enjoy the blazing gift?

PROM. And by it shall give birth to various arts.

CHOR. For such offences doth the wrath of Jove
Thus punish thee, relaxing nought of pain?
And is no bound prescrib'd to thy affliction?

PROM. None else, but when his own will shall incline him.

CHOR. Who shall incline his will? Hast thou no hope?
Dost thou not see that thou hast much offended?
But to point out th' offence to me were painful,
And might sound harsh to thee? forbear we then;
Bethink thee how thy ills may find an end.

PROM. How easy, when the foot is not entangled
In misery's thorny maze, to give monitions
And precepts to th' afflicted! Of these things
I was not unadvis'd; and my offence
Was voluntary; in man's cause I drew
These evils on my head: but ills like these,
On this aerial rock to waste away,
This desert and unsocial precipice,

My mind presag'd it not. But cease your grief,
Wail not my present woes; on the rough point
Of this firm cliff descend, and there observe
What further may betide me, e'en the whole
Of my hard fate; indulge me, O indulge
This my request, and sympathize with me
Thus wretched; for affliction knows no rest,
But rolls from breast to breast its vagrant tide.

CHOR. Not to th' unwilling are thy words directed.
With light foot now this nimble-moving seat,
This pure air, thro' whose liquid fields the birds
Winnow their wanton way, I leave; and now
Alight I on this rude and craggy rock,
Anxious to hear all thy unhappy tale.

OCEANUS, PROMETHEUS, CHORUS

OCEA. Far distant, thro' the vast expanse of air,
To thee, Prometheus, on this swift-wing'd steed*,
Whose neck unreign'd obeys my will, I come,
In social sorrow sympathizing with thee.
To this the near affinity of blood
Moves me; and be assur'd, that tie apart,
There is not who can tax my dear regard
Deeper than thou: believe me, this is truth,
Not the false glozings of a flatt'ring tongue.
Instruct me then in what my pow'r may serve thee,
For never shalt thou say thou hast a friend
More firm, more constant than Oceanus.

PROM. Ah me! What draws thee hither? Art thou come
Spectator of my toils? How hast thou ventur'd

* Il paroît monté sur je ne scai quel animal ailé; bizarrerie inexplicable.—Brumoy.—Of this breed was the winged horse of Astolfo.—Orlando Furioso, b. iv, c. 13.

To leave the ocean waves, from thee so call'd,
Thy rock-roof'd grottos arch'd by nature's hand,
And land upon this iron-teeming earth?
Comest thou to visit and bewail my ills?
Behold this sight, behold this friend of Jove,
Th' assertor of his empire, bending here
Beneath a weight of woes by him inflicted.

OCEA. I see it all, and wish to counsel thee,
Wise as thou art, to milder measures: learn
To know thyself; new model thy behaviour,
As the new monarch of the gods requires.
What if thy harsh and pointed speech shou'd reach
The ear of Jove, tho' on his distant throne
High-seated, might they not inflame his rage
T' inflict such tortures, that thy present pains
Might seem a recreation and a sport?
Cease then, unhappy sufferer, cease thy braves,
And meditate the means of thy deliverance.
To thee perchance this seems the cold advice
Of doting age; yet, trust me, woes like these
Are earnings of the lofty-sounding tongue.
But thy unbending spirit disdains to yield
E'en to afflictions, to the present rather
Ambitious to add more. Yet shalt thou not,
If my voice may be heard, lift up thy heel
To kick against the pricks; so rough, thou seest,
So uncontroll'd the monarch of the skies.
But now I go, and will exert my pow'r,
If haply I may free thee from thy pains.
Mean while be calm; forbear this haughty tone:
Has not thy copious wisdom taught thee this,
That mischief still attends the petulant tongue?

PROM. I gratulate thy fortune, that on thee
No blame hath lighted, tho' associate with me

In all, and daring equally. But now
Forbear, of my condition take no care;
Thou wilt not move him; nothing moves his rigour:
Take heed then, lest to go brings harm on thee.

OCEA. Wiser for others than thy self I find
Thy thoughts; yet shalt thou not withold my speed.
And I have hopes, with pride I speak it, hopes
T' obtain this grace, and free thee from thy sufferings.

PROM. For this thou hast my thanks; thy courtesy
With grateful memory ever shall be honour'd.
But think not of it, the attempt were vain,
Nor wou'd thy labour profit me; cease then,
And leave me to my fate: however wretched,
I wish not to impart my woes to others.

OCEA. No; for thy brother's fate, th' unhappy Atlas *,
Afflicts me: on the western shore he stands,
Supporting on his shoulders the vast pillar
Of Heav'n and Earth, a weight of cumbrous grasp.
Him too, the dweller of Cilicia's caves,
I saw, with pity saw, Earth's monstrous son,
With all his hundred heads † subdued by Force,

* We have before seen one brother of Prometheus driven thunder-struck to Tartarus; we have here another of that unhappy family, the famous Atlas, condemned to support in his arms the pillars of the heavens.

† After the defeat of the Titans, Gaia, from an adventure with Tartarus, brought forth this her youngest son, the most enormous and most terrible of all the giant race: he had an hundred dragon-heads; his eyes glared fire; from all his heads he uttered every horrid sound, sometimes intelligible to the gods, sometimes the lowing of a bull, sometimes the roaring of a lion, sometimes the howl of dogs, sometimes the hiss of serpents; his force was so formidable, as alone to endanger the sovereignty of the sky, and to compel Jupiter to exert his whole strength and all his vollied thunder, of which Hesiod has given us a noble description. Happily for poetry, this monster, instead of being driven down to Tartarus, was defeated in the plains of Sicily, where the mountain Ætna was hurled upon him. The genius of

The furious Typhon, who 'gainst all the gods
Made war; his horrid jaws with serpent-hiss
Breath'd slaughter, from his eyes the gorgon glare
Of baleful lightnings flash'd, as his proud force
Wou'd rend from Jove his empire of the sky.
But him the vengeful bolt, instinct with fire,
Smote sore, and dash'd him from his haughty vaunts,
Pierc'd thro' his soul, and wither'd all his strength.
Thus stretch'd out huge in length beneath the roots
Of Ætna, near Trinacria's narrow sea,
Astonied, blasted, spiritless he lies;
On whose high summit Vulcan holds his seat,
And forms the glowing mass. In times to come
Hence streams of torrent fire with hideous roar
Shall burst, and with its wasteful mouths devour
All the fair fields of fruitful Sicily.
Such rage shall Typhon, blasted as he is
With Jove's fierce lightning, pour incessant forth
In smoking whirlwinds and tempestuous flame.

PROM. Thou art not unexperienc'd, nor hast need
Of my instruction; save thyself, how best
Thy wisdom shall direct thee. I will bear
My present fate, till Jove's harsh wrath relents.

OCEA. Know'st thou not this, Prometheus, that soft speech
Is to distemper'd wrath medicinal?

PROM. When seasonably the healing balm's applied;
Else it exasperates the swelling heart.

OCEA. But in the fair endeavour, in th' attempt,
What disadvantage, tell me, dost thou see?

PROM. Unfruitful labour, and light-thoughted folly.

OCEA. Be that my weakness then. Oft' when the wise
Appears not wise, he works the greatest good.

Hesiod seems to have taken fire from hence, and communicated the flame to Æschylus, Pindar, and Virgil.

PROM. This will be deem'd my simple policy.
OCEA. These words indeed remand me to my grotto.
PROM. Cease to bewail me, lest thou wake his wrath.
OCEA. What, the new monarch's of heav'n's potent throne?
PROM. Take care his indignation be not rous'd.
OCEA. Thy misery shall be my monitor.
PROM. Go then, be cautious, hold thy present judgment.
OCEA. Thy words add speed to my dispatch. Already
My plumed steed his levell'd wings displays
To fan the liquid air, thro' fond desire
In his own lodge his wearied speed to rest.

PROMETHEUS, CHORUS.

CHOR. For thee I heave the heart-felt sigh,
My bosom melting at thy woes;
For thee my tear-distilling eye
In streams of tender sorrow flows:
For Jove's imperious ruthless soul,
That scorns the pow'r of mild control,
Chastens with horrid tort'ring pain
Not known to gods, before his iron reign.

E'en yet this ample region o'er
Hoarse strains of sullen woe resound*,
Thy state, thy brother's state deplore,
Age-honour'd glories ruin'd round.
Thy woes, beneath the sacred shade †
Of Asia's pastur'd forests laid,
The chaste inhabitant bewails

* The chorus here alludes to the punishment of Menœtius and Atlas mentioned before.

† This stanza and the next relate to Prometheus, the last to Atlas. All Asia lamented the sufferings of the former; the earth, the sea, and the gloomy depths of Pluto sympathize with Atlas, for whilst he bore the heavens on his shoulders, all below must be violently pressed beneath his feet.—PAUW.

Thy groans re-echoing thro' his plaintive vales.

The Colchian virgin, whose bold hand
Undaunted grasps the warlike spear;
On earth's last verge the Scythian band,
The torpid lake Mæotis near;
Arabia's martial race, that wield
The sharp lance in th' embattled field,
Thro' all their rock-built cities moan,
The crags of Caucasus return the groan.

One other, e'er thy galling chain,
Of heaven's high sons with tortures quell'd,
That rack each joint, each sinew strain,
Titanian Atlas I beheld;
His giant strength condemn'd to bear
The solid, vast, and pond'rous sphere.
The springs whose fresh streams swell around,
The hoarse waves from their depths profound,
And all the gloomy realms below,
Sigh to his sighs, and murmur to his woe.

PROM. It is not pride; deem nobler of me, virgins;
It is not pride, that held me silent thus;
The thought of these harsh chains, that hang me here,
Cuts to my heart. Yet who, like me, advanc'd
To their high dignity our new-rais'd gods?
But let me spare the tale, to you well known.
The ills of man you've heard. I form'd his mind,
And through the cloud of barb'rous ignorance
Diffus'd the beams of knowledge. I will speak,
Not taxing them with blame, but my own gifts
Displaying, and benevolence to them.
They saw indeed, they heard; but what avail'd

Or sight, or sense of hearing, all things rolling
Like the unreal imagery of dreams,
In wild confusion mix'd? The lightsome wall
Of finer masonry, the rafter'd roof
They knew not; but, like ants still buried, delv'd*
Deep in the earth, and scoop'd their sunless caves.
Unmark'd the seasons chang'd, the biting winter,
The flow'r perfumed spring, the ripening summer
Fertile of fruits. At random all their works,
Till I instructed them to mark the stars,
Their rising, and, an harder science yet †,

* The translator has followed the emendation of Pauw; for though *ἀΐσσους* be a proper and general epithet for the provident ants, who are therefore by Ovid styled frugilegæ, and it is to the purpose of Horace, when he says of this little animal, Ore trahit quodcunque potest, yet in this place it has no pertinent analogy to untutored barbarians dwelling in caves: it was not then the industrious forecast of the ant to which Æschylus had occasion to allude, but its nest scooped in the ground: *ἀΐσσους* conveys the precise idea.

† Of the many advantages for which the translator is indebted to Æschylus the greatest and most valuable is the honour which he receives from the acquaintance of some persons of the highest rank, and the most distinguished eminence in literature; among these he is proud to reckon

Richard Paul Jodrell, Esq.

This gentleman has been so kind as to communicate his own observations on one tragedy, the Siege of Thebes, with leave to the compiler of these notes to select from them such as might be found to coincide with his plan; a liberal use has been made of these, enough to make the reader regret that the pressing call for this publication would not admit of a delay, till the same learned person's observations on the other tragedies could be revised; but ex pede Herculem.

The translator had religiously adhered to his original in the *δυσημέτους δύσεις*, v. 457. but was totally at a loss to account for the superior difficulty of marking the setting of the stars. He took the liberty to communicate his embarrassment to Mr. Jodrell, and was immediately favoured with this clear and judicious solution of the passage.

"It is difficult to ascertain the degree of knowledge, which the philosophers contemporary with Æschylus had of the fixed stars; for Hipparchus

Their setting. The rich train of marshall'd numbers
I taught them, and the meet array of letters.

the Rhodian, who flourished only 120 years before Christ, which was near 420 years after the birth of Æschylus, was the first who dared to undertake a thing, which, says Pliny, seemed to surpass the power of a divinity, that of numbering the stars for posterity, and reducing them to a rule. Because the civil year of the ancients did not correspond with the apparent annual motion of the sun, it was impossible by the calendar to ascertain the precise times for the purposes of agriculture, as the same day of the month would not happen in the same season of the year; it was necessary therefore to have recourse to more certain standards and invariable characters to distinguish times, which the risings and the settings of the stars naturally afforded; Prometheus, therefore, with great propriety might boast of this signal and important discovery to mankind: of which Virgil, in his first Georgic, when he delivers his poetical precepts for the husbandman, makes a particular injunction,

Præterea tam sunt Arcturi sidera nobis,
Hædorumque dies servandi, et lucidus anguis, &c.

Hesiod had before given precepts of similar nature.

"Now the rising of a star, as defined by Chrysippus, is its advancement above the earth, and its setting the occultation of it under the earth. (See Stanley's History of Philosophy, part viii. c. 8.) And astronomers have divided the risings and settings of stars, according to their technical expressions, into Cosmical, Achronical, and Heliacal, which are thus explained by Keil in his nineteenth lecture, p. 222. "A star is said to rise or set cosmically, which rises or sets when the sun rises; achronically, when it rises while the sun sets, that is in the evening, when it is in opposition to the sun, and is visible all night; heliacally, when after it has been in conjunction with the sun, and on that account invisible, it comes to be at such a distance from him as to be seen in the morning before sun rising, when the sun, by his apparent motion, recedes from the star towards the east: but the Heliacal setting is, when the sun approaches so near a star, that it hides it with its beams, which keep the fainter light of the star from being perceived." This I conceive to be the meaning of the poet in his epithet of δυσκρίτους, or

——— an harder science yet,
Their setting.———

For by this philosophical solution the observation of the settings of the stars must be attended with more difficulty than that of the risings: this appears to me to be the most natural explication of this passage."

As the rising as well as the setting of the stars may be obscured by the sun's rays I see no difference between them. Might not the clause "an harder science yet" refer to both the rising & setting? T. H.

T' impress these precepts on their hearts I sent
Memory, the active mother of all wisdom.
I taught the patient steer to bear the yoke,
In all his toils joint-labourer with man.
By me the harness'd steed was train'd to whirl
The rapid car, and grace the pride of wealth.
The tall bark, lightly bounding o'er the waves,
I taught its course, and wing'd its flying sail.
To man I gave these arts; with all my wisdom
Yet want I now one art, that useful art
To free myself from these afflicting chains.

CHOR. Unseemly are thy sufferings, sprung from error
And impotence of mind. And now inclos'd
With all these ills, as some unskilful leach
That sinks beneath his malady, thy soul
Desponds, nor seeks medicinal relief.

PROM. Hear my whole story, thou wilt wonder more,
What useful arts, what science I invented.
This first and greatest: when the fell disease
Prey'd on the human frame, relief was none,
Nor healing drug, nor cool refreshing draught,
Nor pain-assuaging unguent; but they pin'd
Without redress, and wasted, till I taught them
To mix the balmy medicine, of pow'r
To chase each pale disease, and soften pain.
I taught the various modes of prophecy,
What truth the dream portends, the omen what
Of nice distinction, what the casual sight
That meets us on the way; the flight of birds,
When to the right, when to the left they take
Their airy course, their various ways of life,
Their feuds, their fondnesses, their social flocks.
I taught th' Haruspex to inspect the entrails,
Their smoothness, and their colour to the gods

Grateful, the gall, the liver streak'd with veins,
The limbs involv'd in fat, and the long chine
Plac'd on the blazing altar; from the smoke
And mounting flame to mark th' unerring omen.
These arts I taught. And all the secret treasures
Deep buried in the bowels of the earth,
Brass, iron, silver, gold, their use to man,
Let the vain tongue make what high vaunts it may,
Are my inventions all; and, in a word,
Prometheus taught each useful art to man.

CHOR. Let not thy love to man o'erleap the bounds
Of reason, nor neglect thy wretched state:
So my fond hope suggests thou shalt be free
From these base chains, nor less in pow'r than Jove.

PROM. Not thus, it is not in the Fates that thus
These things should end: crush'd with a thousand wrongs,
A thousand woes, I shall escape these chains.
Necessity is stronger far than art.

CHOR. Who then is ruler of necessity?

PROM. The triple Fates and unforgetting furies.

CHOR. Must Jove then yield to their superior pow'r?

PROM. He no way shall escape his destin'd fate.

CHOR. What, but eternal empire, in his fate?

PROM. Thou may'st not know this now: forbear t' inquire.

CHOR. Is it of moment what thou keep'st thus close?

PROM. No more of this discourse; it is not time
Now to disclose that which requires the seal
Of strictest secresy; by guarding which
I shall escape the misery of these chains.

CHORUS.

STRO. Never, never may my soul
Jove's all-ruling pow'r defy;
Never feel his harsh control,
Sov'reign ruler of the sky.

When the hallow'd steer has bled*,
When the sacred feast is spread,
'Midst the crystal waves below,
Whence father Ocean's boundless billows flow,
Let not my foot be slow:
There, th' ethereal guests among,
No rude speech disgrace my tongue
May my mind this rev'rence keep;
Print it strong, and grave it deep.

ANTIS. When thro' life's extended scene
Hope her stedfast lustre throws,
Swells the soul with joy serene,
With sublimest triumph glows.
Seest thou this pure lustre shine?
Are these heart-felt raptures thine?
My cold blood curdles in my veins,
To see thy hideous woes, thy tort'ring pains,
And adamantine chains.
Thy free soul, untaught to fear,
Scorn'd the danger threat'ning near;
And for mortals dar'd defy
The sovereign monarch of the sky.

EPOD. Vain thy ardour, vain thy grace,
They nor force nor aid repay;
Like a dream man's feeble race,
Short-liv'd reptiles of a day.
Shall their weak devices move
Th' order'd harmony of Jove?
Touch'd with pity of thy pain,

* The chorus here alludes to the solemn annual festival, which the gods held with their father Oceanus, and at which they showed their piety and reverence by their attendance and ministry.—Pauw.——See Homer, 1 Il. v. 423. with Mr. Pope's note.

All sad and slow I pour the moral strain;
Chang'd from that melting vein,
When the light mellifluous measure
Round thy bath, and round thy bed
For our sea-nymph sister spread,
Awoke young love and bridal pleasure,
And pour'd the soul of harmony,
To greet the bright Hesione.

IO, PROMETHEUS, CHORUS.

IO. Whither, ah whither am I borne*!
To what rude shore, what barb'rous race? O thou,
Whoe'er thou art, that chain'd to that bleak rock,
The seat of desolation, ruest thy crimes,
Say on what shore my wretched footsteps stray.—
Again that sting!—Ah me, that form again!—
With all his hundred eyes the earth-born Argus—
Cover it, Earth! See, how it glares upon me,
The horrid spectre!—Wilt thou not, O Earth,
Cover the dead, that from thy dark abyss
He comes to haunt me, to pursue my steps,
And drive me foodless o'er the barren strand?
Hoarse sounds the reed-compacted pipe †, a note
Sullen and drowsy.—Miserable me!

* The poet here introduces to us the most singular and illustrious personage of ancient Greece, from whom the noblest families were proud of deriving their pedigree; the bare mention of her was a compliment to their vanity, and therefore always well accepted; it had a peculiar propriety here, as it prepared the Athenian spectator to receive her great descendant Hercules, who was to appear in the next play, which unhappily is lost. In the Supplicants we shall have occasion to speak more particularly of her.

† So Ovid seems to have understood this passage,

——— junctisque canendo
Vincere arundinibus servantia lumina tentat.

Whither will these wide-wand'ring errors lead me?
How, son of Saturn, how have I offended,
That with these stings, these tortures thou pursuest me,
And drivest to madness my affrighted soul!
Hear me, supreme of gods, O hear thy suppliant,
Blast me with lightnings, bury me in th' earth,
Or cast me to the monsters of the sea;
But spare these toils, spare these wide-wand'ring errors,
Which drive me round the world, and know no rest.

CHOR. Hear'st thou the voice of this lamenting virgin?
For such she is, tho' in that form disguis'd.

PROM. I hear her griefs, that whirl her soul to madness,
Daughter of Inachus, whose love inflames
The heart of Jove; hence Juno's jealous rage
Drives the poor wanderer restless o'er the world.

IO. Whence is it that I hear my father's name?
Speak to my misery, tell me who thou art;
What wretch art thou, that to a wretch like me
Utterest these truths, naming the malady,
Which, heav'n-inflicted, stings my tortur'd soul
To frenzy? Hence with hurrying steps I rove
Foodless, pursued by never-ceasing wrath.
Ah me! What child of misery ever suffer'd
Misery like mine? But tell me, clearly tell me
What woes await me yet, what ease, what cure?
Say, if thou know'st, speak, tell a wand'ring virgin.

PROM. All, thou can'st wish to learn, I'll tell thee clearly,
Wrapt in no veil abstruse; but in clear terms *,

And still betwixt, his tuneful pipe he plies,
And watch'd his hour to close the keeper's eyes. DRYDEN.

In her distraction she thought she saw the spectre of her keeper Argos, she thought she heard the sound of the pipe with which Mercury lulled all his hundred eyes to sleep.

* Prometheus had mentioned her father's name, and the cause of her suf-

As friend to friend. Thine eyes behold Prometheus,
Whose warm benevolence gave fire to men.

IO. O thou, the common blessing of mankind,
Wretched Prometheus, wherefore are these sufferings?

PROM. Scarce have I ceas'd lamenting my misfortunes.

IO. And wilt thou not allow me that sad office?

PROM. Ask what thou wilt, thou shalt learn all from me.

IO. Say then, who bound thee in that rifted rock?

PROM. The ruthless will of Jove, but Vulcan's hand.

IO. In what offending art thou chasten'd thus?

PROM. Suffice it thee so much has been declar'd.

IO. Say then what time shall end my wretched wand'rings.

PROM. Better repose in ignorance, than know.

IO. Whate'er my woes to come, hide them not from me.

PROM. That favour unreluctant cou'd I grant thee.

IO. Why this delay then to declare the whole?

PROM. Ungrateful task to rend thy soul with anguish.

IO. Regard not me more than is pleasing to me.

PROM. Conjur'd thus strongly I must speak. Hear then.

CHOR. Not yet: this mournful pleasure let me share:
Let us first learn the story of her woes;
Her lips will teach us each sad circumstance
Of misery past; the future be thy task.

PROM. Vouchsafe t' indulge their wish; they merit it;
And are besides the sisters of thy father *.
Nor light the recompense, when they, who hear,
Melt at the melancholy tale, and drop,
In pity drop, the sympathizing tear.

ferings; from whence Iö, rightly conceiving him to be a prophet, had requested him to tell her *clearly* what woes yet awaited her, and how they might be remedied: he answers, I will tell thee *clearly*, without that enigmatical obscurity which had rendered oracles famous for

Dark-utter'd answers of ambiguous sense.

* Inachus, the father of Iö, was the son of Oceanus and Tethys.

Ill wou'd excuse become me, or denial;
Take then the plain unornamented tale
Ye wish to hear; tho' sad the task enjoin'd,
And hard: for how relate the heav'n-sent tempest
That burst upon my head, my form thus chang'd,
And all the weight of woe that overwhelms me?
Still, when retir'd to rest, air-bodied forms *
Visit my slumber nightly, soothing me
With gentle speech, "Blest maid, why hoard for ever
"Thy virgin treasure, when the highest nuptials
"Await thy choice; the flames of soft desire
"Have touch'd the heart of Jove; he burns with love:
"Disdain not, gentle virgin, ah disdain not
"The couch of Jove; to Lerna's deep recess,
"Where graze thy father's herds the meads along,
"Go, gentle virgin, crown the god's desires."
The night returns, the visionary forms
Return again, and haunt my troubled soul
Forbidding rest, till to my father's ear
I dar'd disclose the visions of the night.
To Pytho, to Dodona's vocal grove
He sent his seers, anxious to know what best
Was pleasing to the gods. Return'd they bring
Dark-utter'd answers of ambiguous sense.
At length one oracle distinct and plain
Pronounc'd its mandates, charging Inachus
To drive me from his house and from my country,

* Io tells her tale with great propriety, and by preserving the decorum of her own character, consults the dignity of her illustrious descendants. The circumstance of the vision, and the influence of the god over her slumbers, is a fine stroke of nature, embellished with a rich poetical imagination;

These are the day-dreams of a maid in love.

Ovid, who had no prejudice of high-descended ancestry to flatter, has taken the liberty to depart from this bienseance; Pellicis argolicæ is a coarse appellation, and his poem is so much the worse for it.

To rove at large o'er earth's extremest bounds:
Shou'd he refuse, the vengeful bolt of Jove,
Wing'd with red flames wou'd all his race destroy.
Obedient to the Pythian god he drove me
Unwilling from his house, himself unwilling
Compell'd by Jove, and harsh necessity.
Strait was my sense disorder'd, my fair form
Chang'd, as you see, disfigur'd with these horns;
And tortur'd with the bryze's horrid sting,
Wild with my pain with frantic speed I hurried
To Cenchrea's vale with silver-winding streams *
Irriguous, and the fount whence Lerna spreads
Its wide expanse of waters; close behind
In wrathful mood walk'd Argus, earth-born herdsman,
With all his eyes observant of my steps.
Him unawares a sudden fate depriv'd
Of life; whilst I, stung with that heav'n-sent pest,
Am driv'n with devious speed from land to land.
Thou hast my tale. If ought of woes to come
Thy prescient mind divines, relate them freely;
Nor thro' false pity with fallacious words
Sooth my vain hopes, my soul abhors as base
The fabling tongue of glozing courtesy.

CHOR. No more, no more, forbear. Ah never, never
Conceiv'd I that a tale so strange shou'd reach
My ears; that miseries, woes, distresses, terrors,
Dreadful to sight, intolerable to sense,
Shou'd shock me thus: woe, woe, unhappy fate!
How my soul shudders at the fate of Iö!

PROM. Already dost thou sigh, already tremble?

* The translator hath here adopted the very judicious reading of Pauw with regard to Cenchrea; but notwithstanding his aliud melius et facilius tibi dabo, prefers the Λερνης τε κρηνην of Canterus to his Λερνης or Λερνην κδρην τε.

Check these emotions till the whole is heard.

CHOR. Speak, show us: to the sick some gleam of comfort
Flows from the knowledge of their pains to come.

PROM. Your first request with ease has been obtain'd;
For from her lips you wish'd to hear the tale
Of her afflictions. Hear the rest; what woes
From Juno's rage await this suff'ring virgin.
And thou with deep attention mark my words,
Daughter of Inachus; and learn from them
The traces of thy way. First then, from hence
Turn to the orient sun, and pass the height
Of these uncultur'd mountains; thence descend
To where the wandering Scythians, train'd to bear
The distant-wounding bow, on wheels aloft
Roll on their wattled cottages; to these
Approach not nigh, but turn thy devious steps
Along the rough verge of the murm'ring main,
And pass the barb'rous country: on the left
The Chalybes inhabit, whose rude hands
Temper the glowing steel; beware of these,
A savage and inhospitable race*.
Thence shalt thou reach the banks of that proud stream,
Which from its † roaring torrent takes its name;
But pass it not, tempt not its dangerous depths
Unfordable, till now thy weary steps
Shall reach the distant bound of Caucasus,
Monarch of mountains; from whose extreme height
The bursting flood rolls down his pow'r of waters.
Passing those star-aspiring heights, descend
Where to the south the Amazonian tents,

* The horrid custom of sacrificing strangers, whose ill fortune drove them on their coasts, marks the savage and inhospitable manners of these barbarians.

† Araxis.

Hostile to men, stretch o'er the plain; whose troops
In after times shall near Thermodon's banks
Fix in Themiscyra's tow'rs their martial rule,
Where Salmydesia points her cruel rocks,
And glories in her wrecks: this female train
With courteous zeal shall guide thee in thy way.
Arriving where the dark Cimmerian lake
Spreads from its narrow mouth its vast expanse,
Leave it, and boldly plunge thy vent'rous foot
In the Mæotic straits; the voice of fame
Shall eternize thy passage, and from thee
Call it the Bosphorus *: there shalt thou quit
The shores of Europe, and intrepid reach
The continent of Asia.—Seems he now,
This tyrant of the skies, seems he in all †.
Of fierce and headlong violence, when his love
Plunges a mortal in such deep distresses?
A rugged wooer, virgin, have thy charms
Won thee; for be assur'd what I have told thee
Is but a prelude to the woes untold.

IO. Ah miserable me!

PROM. Again that exclamation, that deep groan!

* Bosphorus, the passage of the heifer.

† The Chorus had declared themselves to be deeply affected at the narrative of Iö; Prometheus therefore, having enumerated more and greater woes which yet awaited her, addresses them thus: Think you that this tyrant of the skies is of a fierce and headlong violence, when he has thus driven a mortal, even whilst he is a suiter for her love, to these wanderings? Then turning to the unhappy sufferer, he says,

A rugged wooer, virgin, have thy charms
Won thee.

There is in this a malignant triumph, well suited to the implacable resentment of the speaker, which would not allow him to acknowledge that Jupiter did not voluntarily inflict these miseries on his favourite fair, but that with great reluctance he was obliged to make this sacrifice to the jealous and enraged Juno.

What wilt thou do, when thou shalt learn the rest?

CHOR. Remains there ought of ills yet to be told?

PROM. A wide tempestuous sea of baleful woes.

IO. What then has life desirable? Why rather
From this rude cliff leap I not headlong down,
And end my woes? Better to die at once,
Than linger out a length of life in pain.

PROM. Ill wou'dst thou bear my miseries, by the Fates
Exempt from death, the refuge of th' afflicted.
But my afflictions know no bounds, till Jove
Falls from th' imperial sovereignty of heav'n.

IO. Shall he then fall? Shall the time come, when Jove *
Shall sink dethron'd? I think I shou'd rejoice
To see the tyrant's ruin: Shou'd I not,
Since from his hands I suffer all these ills.

PROM. Then be thou well assur'd it shall be so.

IO. And who shall wrest th' imperial sceptre from him?

PROM. Himself, destroy'd by his improvident counsels.

IO. Oh say, if harmless what I ask, say how.

PROM. Urging a marriage he shall dearly rue.

IO. Heav'n-sprung, or mortal? If permitted, say.

PROM. What matters which? It may not be disclos'd.

IO. Shall then a wife deprive him of the throne?

PROM. She greater than the sire shall bear a son.

IO. Has he no means of pow'r t' avert this fate?

* This is one of those fine touches which distinguish a master's hand. Io had been cruelly treated, and was sinking even to desperation under the sense of the miseries which she was yet to suffer, when she was told that her rugged wooer, from whom all her afflictions arose, should one day be deprived of the sovereignty of heaven. Here, instead of that pleasure with which it was supposed the predicted event would fill her indignant mind, her concealed love just rises to soften her resentment, and then, fearful of a discovery, hides itself beneath her conscious dignity, and the modest reserve of her sex: nay, the very questions which she afterwards asks, apparently to show her joy for the ruin of Jupiter, discover the most delicate tincture of tender and delicate sensibility.

PROM. None, till from these vile chains I shall be free.
IO. And who, 'gainst Jove's high will, shall set thee free?
PROM. One, of necessity, from thee descended.
IO. From me! My son release thee from thy pains?
PROM. Third of thy race, first numb'ring ten descents *.
IO. Oracular this, of difficult conjecture.
PROM. Check then thy wish, nor seek to know thy toils.
IO. Do not hold forth a grace, then snatch it from me.
PROM. Of two relations I will grant thee either.
IO. Propose the two, then leave the choice to me.
PROM. Shall I declare the rest of thy misfortunes,
Or dost thou wish to know him that shall free me?
CHOR. The first to her, to me this other grace
Vouchsafe, nor my request treat with disdain.
To her impart what toils remain; to me
Him that shall free thee; this I most desire.
PROM. This your request I shall not be averse
To gratify, and tell you all you wish.
First for thy various wand'rings: Mark my words,
And grave them on the tablet of thy heart.
When thou shalt pass the flood, the common bound
Of either continent, direct thy steps
Right to the fiery portals of the east,
The sun's bright walk, along the roaring beach,
Till thou shalt come to the gorgonian plains
Of Cisthine, where dwell the swan-like forms
Of Phorcys' daughters, bent and white with age †;

* From Iö descended Epaphus, Libye, Belus, Danaus, Hypermnestra, Abas, Prœtus, Acrisius, Danæ, Perseus, Electrion, Alcmena, Hercules.

† There is something so very ingenious in Mr. Bryant's analysis of these daughters of Phorcys, that the most rigid exactors of historical proof will not be offended to see it here laid before the reader. This history, he says, relates to an Amonian temple founded in the extreme parts of Africa, in which there were three priestesses of Canaanitish race, who on that account are said to be in the shape of swans, that bird being the insigne of their na-

One common eye have these, one common tooth,
And never does the sun with cheerful ray
Visit them darkling, nor the moon's pale orb
That silvers o'er the night. The Gorgons nigh,
Their sisters these, spread their broad wings, and wreath
Their horrid hair with serpents, fiends abhorr'd,
Whom never mortal cou'd behold, and live.
Be therefore warn'd, and let it profit thee
To learn what else detestable to sight
Lies in thy way, and dang'rous. Shun the Gryphins,
Those dumb and rav'nous dogs of Jove. Avoid
The Arimaspian troops, whose frowning foreheads
Glare with one blazing eye; along the banks,
Where Pluto rolls his streams of gold, they rein *
Their foaming steeds; approach them not, but seek
A land far distant, where the tawny race †

tion. The notion of their having but one eye among them took its rise from an hieroglyphic very common in Egypt, and probably in Canaan: this was the representation of an eye, which was said to be engraved upon the pediment of their temples. This may have been one reason, among others, why the Cyclopians and Arimaspians are represented with one eye.

> The Arimaspian troops, whose frowning foreheads
> Glare with one blazing eye.

Bryant's Analysis, vol. i. p. 380. For his account of Medusa, see p. 510. &c.

* Pluto is here the name of a river ἀπὸ τοῦ πλούτου, from the gold found there; with which these northern parts are by historians said to abound, but to be inaccessible on account of the Gryphins, the fiercest and most formidable of all birds, against which the Arimaspians are continually in arms. Stanley.

† The ancients placed the Ethiopians at the extremities of the earth not only towards the south, but to the east, and also to the west; hence they are said to dwell near the fountains of the sun, so Virgil,

> Oceani finem juxta solemque cadentem
> Ultimus Æthiopum locus est.

The river Ethiops, Niger, or Nigris, rolls his black stream through immense

Dwell near the fountains of the sun, and where
The Nigris pours his dusky waters; wind
Along his banks, till thou shalt reach the fall
Where from the mountains with Papyrus crown'd
The venerable Nile impetuous pours
His headlong torrent; he shall guide thy steps
To those irriguous plains, whose triple sides
His arms surround; there have the Fates decreed
Thee and thy sons to form the lengthen'd line.—
Is ought imperfect, ought obscure? Resume
Th' inquiry, and be taught with greater clearness:
I have more leisure than I wish to have.

CHOR. If thou hast ought remaining, ought omitted,
To tell her of her woful wand'rings, speak it:
If all has been declar'd, to us vouchsafe
The grace we ask; what, thou rememb'rest well.

PROM. Her wand'ring in full measure has she heard.
That she may know she has not heard in vain,
Her labours pass'd, e'er these rude rocks she reach'd,
Will I recite, good argument that truth
Stamps my predictions sure: nor shall I use
A length of words, but speak thy wand'rings briefly.
Soon as thy foot reach'd the Molossian ground,
And round Dodona's ridgy heights, where stands
The seat oracular of Thesprotian Jove,
And, wond'rous prodigy, the vocal groves,
These in clear, plain, unquestionable terms
Hail'd thee "Illustrious wife of Jove that shall be,"
If that may sooth thy soul. The tort'ring sting
Thence drove thee wand'ring o'er the wave-washed strand

deserts scorched with intolerable heat, till it comes to its last cataract; thence it falls into Egypt, and assumes the name of the Nile. STANLEY.—"Four "miles below Cairo it divideth, making of the richest portion of the land a "triangular island, named Delta, in that it beareth the form of the Greek "Δ." SANDYS.

To the great gulf of Rhea, thence thy course
Thro' the vex'd billows hither. But know this,
In after times shall that deep gulph from thee
Be call'd th' Ionian, and preserve to men
The memory of thy passage. This to thee,
Proving the prescience of my mind, that sees
More than appears: The rest to you and her,
Resuming my discourse, I speak in common.
On the land's extreme verge a city stands,
Canobus, proudly elevate, nigh where the Nile
Rolls to the sea his rich stream: there shall Jove
Heal thy distraction, and with gentle hand
Sooth thee to peace. Of his high race a son,
The dusky Epaphus, shall rise, and rule
The wide extended land o'er which the Nile
Pours his broad waves. In the fifth line from him
Fifty fair sisters shall return to Argos
Unwillingly, to fly the kindred beds
Of fifty brothers; these with eager speed,
Swift as the faulcon's flight when he pursues
The dove at hand, shall follow, nor obtain
The nuptials, which th' indignant gods deny.
These shall Pelasgia see by female hands
Welt'ring in gore, the night's convenient gloom
Fav'ring the daring deed; each female draws
The trenchant sword, and in her husband's blood
Stains the broad blade. Thus fatal to my foes
Be love! Yet one shall feel its softer flame
Melting her soul, and from the general carnage
Preserve her husband, choosing to be deem'd
Of base degenerate spirit, rather than stain
Her gentle hands with blood. From her shall Argos
Receive a long imperial line of kings.
The full distinct relation wou'd be tedious.

From her shall rise the hero, strong to wing
The dreaded shaft; he from these tort'ring pains
Shall set me free: this my age-honour'd mother,
Titanian Themis, with oracular voice
Foretold; but when, or how, requires a length
Of narrative, which known wou'd nought avail thee.

Ah me! Ah wretched me! That pang again!
Again that fiery pang, whose madd'ning smart
Corrodes and rankles in my breast! With fear
My heart pants thick; wildly my eyeballs roll;
Distraction drives my hurried steps a length
Of weary wand'rings; my ungovern'd tongue
Utters tumultuous ravings, that roll high
The floods of passion swoln with horrid woes.

PROMETHEUS, CHORUS.

CHORUS.

STROPH. Was it not wisdom's sovereign pow'r
That beam'd her brightest, purest flame,
T' illume her sage's soul the thought to frame*,
And clothe with words his heav'n-taught lore?
"Whoe'er thou art, whom young desire
"Shall lead to Hymen's holy fire,
"Choose, from thy equals choose thy humble love:
"Let not the pomp of wealth allure thine eye,
"Nor high-trac'd lineage thy ambition move;
"Ill suits with low degree t' aspire so high."

ANTIST. Never, O never may my fate
See me a splendid victim led
To grace the mighty Jove's imperial bed,
Or share a god's magnific state.

* This sage was Pittacus of Mitylene, one of the seven celebrated wise men of Greece.

When Iö's miseries meet my eyes,
What horrors in my soul arise!
Her virgin bosom, harb'ring high intent,
In man delights not, and his love disdains;
Hence the dire pest by wrathful Juno sent,
Her wide wild wand'rings hence, and agonizing pains.

EPODE. Me less ambitious thoughts engage,
And love within my humbler sphere:
Hence my soul rests in peace secure from fear,
Secure from danger's threat'ning rage.
Me may the pow'rs that rule the sky
Ne'er view with love's resistless eye:
Ah, never be th' unequal conflict mine,
To strive with their inextricable love:
Might not my heart against itself combine?
Or how escape the pow'rful arts of Jove?

PROM. Yet shall this Jove, with all his self-will'd pride,
Learn humbler thoughts, taught by that fatal marriage,
Which from the lofty throne of sovereign rule
Shall sink him to a low and abject state,
And on his head fulfil his father's curse,
The curse of Saturn, vented in that hour
When from his ancient royalty he fell.
Of all the gods not one, myself except,
Can warn him of his fate, and how to shun
Th' impending ruin. I know all, and how.
Let him then sit, and glorying in his height
Roll with his red right hand his vollied thunder
Falsely secure, and wreath his bick'ring flames.
Yet nought shall they avail him, nor prevent
His abject and dishonourable fall.
Such rival adversary forms he now

Against himself, prodigious in his might,
And unassailable; whose rage shall roll
Flames that surpass his lightnings, fiercer bolts
That quash his thunders; and from Neptune's hand
Dash his trined mace, that from the bottom stirs
The troubled sea, and shakes the solid earth.
Crush'd with this dreadful ruin shall he learn
How different, to command, and to obey.

CHOR. Thy ominous tongue gives utterance to thy wish.

PROM. It is my wish, and shall be ratified.

CHOR. What, shall high Jove bend to a greater lord?

PROM. And to a yoke more galling stoop his neck.

CHOR. Dost thou not fear, vaunting this bold discourse?

PROM. What shou'd I fear, by Fate exempt from death?

CHOR. But he may add fresh tortures to thy pain.

PROM. Let him then add them, I await them all.

CHOR. Wise they, who reverence the stern pow'r of vengeance.

PROM. Go then, with prompt servility fall down
Before your lord, fawn, cringe, and sue for grace.
For me, I value him at less than nothing.
Let him exert his brief authority,
And lord it whilst he may; his pow'r in Heav'n
Shall vanish soon, nor leave a trace behind.—
But see, his messenger hastes on amain,
Th' obsequious lackey of this new-made monarch;
He comes, I ween, the bearer of fresh tidings.

MERCURY, PROMETHEUS, CHORUS.

MERC. To thee grown old in craft, deep drench'd in gall,
Disgustful to the gods, too prodigal
Of interdicted gifts to mortal man,
Thief of the fire of Heav'n, to thee my message.
My father bids thee say what nuptials these
Thy tongue thus vaunts as threat'ning his high pow'r;
And clearly say, couch'd in no riddling phrase,

Each several circumstance; propound not to me
Ambiguous terms, Prometheus; for thou seest
Jove brooks not such, unfit to win his favour.

PROM. Thou doest thy message proudly, in high terms,
Becoming well the servant of such lords.
Your youthful pow'r is new; yet vainly deem ye
Your high-rais'd tow'rs impregnable to pain:
Have I not seen two sovereigns * of the sky
Sink from their glorious state? And I shall see
A third, this present lord, with sudden ruin
Dishonourably fall. What, seem I now
To dread, to tremble at these new-rais'd gods?
That never shall their force extort from me.
Hence then, the way thou camest return with speed:
Thy vain inquiries get no other answer.

MERC. Such insolence before, so fiery fierce,
Drew on thy head this dreadful punishment.

PROM. My miseries, be assur'd, I would not change
For thy gay servitude, but rather choose
To live a vassal to this dreary rock,
Than lackey the proud heels of Jove. These words,
If insolent, your insolence extorts.

MERC. I think thou art delighted with thy woes.

PROM. Delighted! Might I see mine enemies
Delighted thus! And thee I hold among them.

MERC. And why blame me for thy calamities?

PROM. To tell thee in a word, I hate them all,
These gods; of them I deserv'd well, and they
Ungrateful and unjust work me these ills.

MERC. Thy malady, I find, is no small madness.

PROM. If to detest my enemies be madness,
It is a malady I wish to have.

MERC. Were it well with thee, who cou'd brook thy pride?

* Ouranus dethroned by his son Saturn, and Saturn by his son Jupiter.

PROM. Ah me!
MERC. That sound of grief Jove doth not know.
PROM. Time, as its age advanceth, teaches all things.
MERC. All its advances have not taught thee wisdom.
PROM. I shou'd not else waste words on thee, a vassal.
MERC. Nought wilt thou answer then to what Jove asks.
PROM. If due, I wou'd repay his courtesy,
MERC. Why am I check'd, why rated as a boy?
PROM. A boy thou art, more simple than a boy,
If thou hast hopes to be inform'd by me.
Not all his tortures, all his arts shall move me
T' unlock my lips, till this curs'd chain be loos'd.
No, let him hurl his flaming lightnings, wing
His whitening snows, and with his thunders shake
The rocking earth, they move not me to say
What force shall wrest the sceptre from his hand *.
MERC. Weigh these things well, will these unloose thy chains?
PROM. Well have they long been weigh'd, and well consider'd.
MERC. Subdue, vain fool, subdue thy insolence,
And let thy miseries teach the juster thoughts.
PROM. Thy counsels, like the waves that dash against
The rock's firm base, disquiet but not move me.
Conceive not of me that, thro' fear what Jove
May in his rage inflict, my fix'd disdain

* It is not necessary to send the ladies to Pindar for their information in this celestial anecdote, as our courtly Lansdowne in his Mask of Peleus and Thetis is ready to discover the secret. Jupiter beheld the charms of Thetis, daughter of Oceanus, with the eye of a lover, and intended to advance her as his consort to the imperial throne of Heaven. Now it was in the Fates that this lady should have a son, who was to be greater than his father. Prometheus alone, by his divine foresight, could open the danger of Jupiter; but this he firmly refused to do, till he should be released from the rock. After that Hercules, by the permission of Jupiter, had killed the tormenting eagle, and unbound his chains, he disclosed the decree of the Fates: Thetis was given in marriage to Peleus, and the prophecy was accomplished in the famous Achilles.

Shall e'er relent, e'er suffer my firm mind
To sink to womanish softness, to fall prostrate,
To stretch my supplicating hands, entreating
My hated foe to free me from these chains.
Far be that shame, that abject weakness from me.

MERC. I see thou art implacable, unsoften'd
By all the mild entreaties I can urge;
But like a young steed rein'd, that proudly struggles,
And champs his iron curb, thy haughty soul
Abates not of its unavailing fierceness.
But pride, disdaining to be rul'd by reason,
Sinks weak and valueless. But mark me well,
If not obedient to my words, a storm,
A fiery and inevitable deluge
Shall burst in threefold vengeance on thy head.
First, his fierce thunder wing'd with lightning flames
Shall rend this rugged rock, and cover thee
With hideous ruin: long time shalt thou lie
Astonied in its rifted sides, till dragg'd
Again to light; then shall the bird of Jove,
The rav'ning eagle, lur'd with scent of blood,
Mangle thy body, and each day returning,
An uninvited guest, plunge his fell beak,
And feast and riot on thy black'ning liver.
Expect no panse, no respite, till some god
Comes to relieve thy pains, willing to pass
The dreary realms of ever-during night *,
The dark descent of Tartarus profound.
Weigh these things well; this is no fiction drest

* The scholiast explains this passage by saying, that whoever should attempt to succour Prometheus, and deliver him from his pain, should himself be sent to the shades of Orcus, and the dark abyss of Tartarus. The words are very remarkable; for want of a better explication of them, we must take up with this.

In vaunting terms, but words of serious truth.
The mouth of Jove knows not to utter falsehood,
But what he speaks is fate. Be cautious then,
Regard thyself; let not o'erweening pride
Despise the friendly voice of prudent counsel.

CHOR. Nothing amiss we deem his words, but fraught
With reason, who but wills thee to relax
Thy haughty spirit, and by prudent counsels
Pursue thy peace: be then advis'd; what shame
For one so wise to persevere in error?

PROM. All this I knew e'er he declar'd his message.
That enemy from enemy shou'd suffer
Extreme indignity is nothing strange.
Let him then work his horrible pleasure on me;
Wreath his black curling flames, tempest the air
With vollied thunders and wild warring winds,
Rend from its roots the firm earth's solid base,
Heave from the roaring main its boisterous waves,
And dash them to the stars; me let him hurl,
Caught in the fiery tempest, to the gloom
Of deepest Tartarus; not all his pow'r
Can quench th' ethereal breath of life in me.

MERC. Such ravings, such wild counsels might you hear,
From moon-struck madness. What is this but madness?
Were he at ease, wou'd he abate his frenzy?
But you, whose gentle hearts with social sorrow
Melt at his suff'rings, from this place remove,
Remove with speed, lest the tempestuous roar
Of his fierce thunder strike your souls with horror.

CHOR. To other themes, to other counsels turn
Thy voice, where pleaded reason may prevail:
This is ill urg'd, and may not be admitted.
Wou'dst thou solicit me to deeds of baseness*?

* The Chorus throughout this tragedy find themselves in a very delicate

Whate'er betides, with him will I endure it.
The vile betrayer I have learn'd to hate;
There is no fouler stain, my soul abhors it.

MERC. Remember you are warn'd; if ill o'ertake you
Accuse not Fortune, lay not the blame on Jove,
As by his hand sunk in calamities
Unthought of, unforeseen: no, let the blame
Light on yourselves; your folly not unwarn'd,
Not unawares, but 'gainst your better knowledge,
Involv'd you in th' inextricable toils.

PROM. He fables not; I feel in very deed
The firm earth rock; the thunder's deep'ning roar
Rolls with redoubled rage; the bick'ring flames
Flash thick; the eddying sands are whirl'd on high;
In dreadful opposition the wild winds
Rend the vex'd air; the boist'rous billows rise
Confounding sea and sky; th' impetuous storm
Rolls all its terrible fury on my head.
Seest thou this, awful Themis; and thou, Ether,
Thro' whose pure azure floats the general stream
Of liquid light, see you what wrongs I suffer!

and difficult situation. Consanguinity and affection brought them to the rock to commiserate the afflictions of Prometheus; hence they became interested in the action: as his sufferings were unjust, their office, which led them to favour the good, led them also to express their disapprobation of his punishment; but as it was inflicted by Jupiter, their piety and reverence would not permit them to oppose the king of the gods; all that remained for them was to condole with him, to give him friendly counsel, and to soften his inflamed resentment: their character is preserved with wonderful propriety and decorum. Even at the last, when nothing could prevail with him to abate his implacable spirit, and Mercury with much tenderness advised them to retire, and avoid the impending storm, they answer with a becoming firmness, that they could not be guilty of such a deed of baseness; ancient manners, which considered the desertion of a friend as the vilest of actions, required this sacrifice of their own safety.

THE

SUPPLICANTS.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

CHORUS, the Daughters of DANAUS.

DANAUS.

PELASGUS.

HERALD.

THE

SUPPLICANTS.

THE fire and fury, that rages through the former Play, is agreeably contrasted, where perhaps the reader least expected it, with the sober spirit of the daughters of Danaus. These illustrious Supplicants are drawn indeed with a firmness of soul becoming their high rank, but tempered with a modest and amiable sensibility, and an interesting plaintiveness, that might have been a model even to the gentle and passionate Ovid; and that heart must have little of the fine feelings of humanity, that does not sympathize with their distress. The provident wisdom of their father Danaus, the calm but firm dignity of Pelasgus, the inviolable attachment to the laws of hospitality, the solemn sense of religion, and the chasteness of sentiment through the whole, must please every mind that is capable of being touched with the gracious simplicity of ancient manners.

The scene is near the shore, in an open grove close to thealtar and images of the Gods presid-

ing over the sacred games, with a view of the sea and the ships of Ægyptus on one side, and of the towers of Argos on the other; with hills, and woods, and vales, a river flowing between them; all together with the persons of the drama forming a picture, that would have well employed the united pencils of Poussin and Claude Lorain.

THE

SUPPLICANTS.

* CHOR. PROTECTOR of the suppliant, gracious Jove,
Look with an eye of pity on this train,
Which from the gentle depths of Nile have sped
Their naval enterprise. Those sacred fields,
That border on the Syrian wastes, we leave,
Not by the public voice of justice doom'd †

* Danaus, the fourth in descent from Iö, had fifty daughters; his brother Ægyptus had fifty sons. It was much for the interest of Ægyptus to unite the families and the kingdoms, by marrying his sons to the daughters of his brother; but the proposal, which was urged with such violence and rudeness, was so disagreeable to Danaus and his female train, that they sailed from the mouth of the Nile, and sought refuge on the coast of Greece, where we find them just arrived.

† The laws of ancient Greece were severe, not sanguinary, till Draco; they permitted even the murderer to atone for his crime by banishment, which often was voluntary, sometimes the punishment inflicted by the state; there are many instances in Homer; in Statius Tydeus, stained with a brother's blood, fled a voluntary exile to the court of Adrastus: hence the Furies, declaring their office to Minerva, tell her

'Tis ours to drive the murderer from the house.

Tyndarus, in the Electra of Euripides, urges this strongly against Orestes,

Deaf to the call of justice he infring'd
The firm authority of the public laws;
For when beneath my daughter's murdering axe

For blood, but willing fugitives from youths
Too near allied, whose impious love wou'd raise
Perforce the nuptial bed by us a orr'd;
Sons of Ægyyptus they. Our father Danaus,
On whose authority we build our counsels,
And strengthen our abhorrence, plann'd these measures,
And wrought us to this honourable toil,
To wing our swift flight o'er the billowy main,
And reach the shores of Argos *, whence we draw
Our vaunted lineage, from th' embrace of Jove
Enamour'd of that virgin, whom transform'd
The tort'ring sting drove wand'ring o'er the world.
To what more friendly region can we take
Our progress, bearing in our suppliant hands
These peaceful branches crown'd with sacred wreaths †

The royal Agamemnon bow'd his head,
He ought to have call'd the laws, the righteous laws,
T' avenge the blood, and by appeal to them
Have driven his mother from this princely mansion:
Thus 'midst his ills calm reason had borne rule,
Justice had held its course, and he been righteous.

* We have here indubitable marks of a colony moving from Egypt to settle in Greece; and as these emigrants came forward under the auspices of their tutelary Isis, we might well expect to find the symbol of that goddess. The national vanity of the Grecians was hurt to see these strangers give birth to an illustrious line of kings and heroes, whose glory eclipsed that of their own Autocthones; but their lively imagination soon found a remedy for this; it created a daughter from their Inachus, dressed her out with every charm that might engage the love of Jupiter, transmuted the symbolical into a real heifer, and sent her into Egypt, there to bring forth the famous Epaphus. Now these emigrants might be received with a good grace, as being originally of Argive extraction; and Greece, in return for a colony, gratuitously presented Egypt with a goddess.

It was usual for supplicants to stretch forth in their hands branches of olive bound with wreaths of wool; see the Furies, p. 393. v. ult. Euripides expresses this by ἱκτῆρι θαλλῷ. So Virgil,

Ye royal tow'rs, thou earth, and ye fair streams
Of oriant chrystal, ye immortal gods
In the high heav'ns enthron'd, ye awful pow'rs
That deep beneath hold your tremendous seats,
Jove the preserver, guardian of the roof
Where dwells the pious man, receive your suppliants,
Breathe o'er these realms your favourable spirit,
And form them to receive this female train!
But for those men, that proud injurious band
Sprung from Ægyptus e'er they fix their foot
On this moist shore, drive them into the deep,
With all their flying streamers and quick oars,
There let them meet the whirlwind's boist'rous rage,
Thund'rings, and light'nings, and the furious blasts
That harrow up the wild tempestuous waves,
And perish in the storm, e'er they ascend
Our kindred bed, and seize against our will
What nature and the laws of blood deny *.

To thee, th' avenging pow'r
Ador'd beyond the waves of this wide main,
Raise we the solemn strain,
Her progeny, that cropp'd each various flow'r
Which deck'd the fragrant mead,
Till Jove's soft touch her alter'd shape caress'd,
And sooth'd her soul to rest:

Et vittâ comptos voluit prætendere ramos. Æn. viii. v. 128.

The olive was an emblem of peace, and Servius tells us, that its branches were bound with wool, the lamb being the gentlest of animals, to show the weak and defenceless state of the presenter.

* There does not appear to be any thing in nature, or in the customs of antiquity, to hinder marriages within this line of consanguinity. When Pelasgus asks these supplicants whether their laws forbid such alliances, they answer evasively; this allegation must therefore be considered only as an oratorical exaggeration.

Thereto we add thy fate-appointed name,
Epaphus of mighty fame,
To thee we raise the strain, whilst now we tread
Thy reverenc'd mother's fertile soil,
And record each various toil;
Now shall each trace to light be brought,
Tho' far surpassing human thought;
Now shall the wond'rous tale unfold,
Mysterious deeds of times of old.
Dwells in this land some augur near?
If these sad wailings reach his ear,
Will he not deem the mournful note
Warbled from Philomela's throat,
Such time as from the falcon's wing
She leaves her fav'rite haunt and spring,
And o'er her nest, and o'er her young
Attunes her sweetest, saddest song,
And in the melancholy strain
Laments the fate of Itys slain;
In sullen rage the mother stands,
And in her son's blood bathes her hands.
In notes so sweet, so sad, I try
To raise th' Iönian harmony;
And rend these cheeks, that ripening drew
On Nile's warm banks their vermeil hue;
Whilst at each solemn, pensive pause
My bursting heart the deep sigh draws,
And, woe-betroth'd, fears e'en its friends,
If yet perchance one friend attends,
For that our sails the deep explore,
Leaving our native dusky shore.
Ye Gods, from whom we proudly trace
The glories of our high-born race,
Hear us, ye pow'rs, propitious hear,
And show that justice is your care;

Guard in our just, our holy cause
The sanctity of nature's laws;
You, that abhor each impious deed,
Arise, protect the nuptial bed.
When Mars to slaughter gives the reins *,
And rages o'er th' ensanguin'd plains,
To each that flies the altar gives
A refuge, and the suppliant lives,
For Jove, with pious pray'rs ador'd,
Commands stern war to drop the sword.

Jove's firm decree, tho' wrapt in night,
Beams 'midst the gloom a constant light;
Man's fate obscure in darkness lies,
Not to be pierc'd by mortal eyes:
The just resolves of his high mind
A glorious consummation find;
Tho' in majestic state enthron'd
Thick clouds and dark enclose him round,
As from the tow'r of heav'n his eye
Surveys bold man's impiety;
Till, his ripe wrath on vengeance bent,
He arms each god for punishment †,

* There is a difficulty in the original, owing probably to a corrupted text, which no annotator has yet cleared; the general idea is very obvious, supplicants fly for protection to the altars of the gods, which afford refuge even in the violence of war. Plutarch expresses the same sentiment, ἔστι δήλῳ φεύξιμος βωμός. καὶ πολεμίους φεύγοντες, ἂν ἀγάλματος λάβωνται ἢ ναοῦ, θαῤῥοῦσιν. De Superstitione. It is well known how impious it was held by the Grecians to offer violence to those who had sate as supplicants at their altars.

† This sense arises from the plain and literal construction of the text; sententia est optima, and every attempt to alter it has only tortured it into obscurity.

This alludes to the solemn lamentations, the θρηνῳδίαι, chanted by their

And from his high and holy throne
Sends all his awful judgments down.
And may his eye our wrongs survey,
Mark'd by insulting man his prey;
As each bold youth by passion fir'd
Against our bosom-peace conspir'd,
And to deceit's smooth influence
Join'd rude and boist'rous violence:
An infant forest these, that shoot
Their wild growth from one parent root,
And o'er our fresh bloom strive to spread
Their cheerless and malignant shade.
Thus I attune my notes of woe,
And bid the varied measures flow;
Now the shrilling descant chase,
Now solemn sink the deep'ning base;
Thus bid the warbled cadence 'plain,
And steep in tears the mournful strain;
A strain to grace my obsequies,
Whilst yet I view yon' golden skies.

Ye rising hills that crown this shore,
Where Apis reign'd in years of yore,
Propitious hear me, nor disdain
To let your echos learn this strain;
Barbaric tho' my voice and rude,
Well may its notes be understood;
Barbaric tho' this purfled stole *,

friends at the funerals of the deceased. Milton, that exact observer of ancient manners, make his Chorus break out into one of these mournful songs on the news of Sampson's death, till Manoa checks them, thinking it more prudent to bury his son with silent obsequies.

* The scholiast, following the usual interpretation of the word, explains ξὺν λαχίδι, by rending their robes, and, amidst the silence of the other an-

Frounc'd around with linen roll:
This blushing veil tho' Sidon gave,
Ye hills of Apis hear, and save!

The vow perform'd, the Gods aton'd,
The pious rites with blessings crown'd,
Death distant waits with slacken'd pace.
Nor dares profane the sacred place.
But will he now his foot repress?
Will the kind Gods their votary bless?
Ah me! these swelling waves of woe,
Whither, ah whither will they flow?

Ye rising hills that crown this shore,
Where Apis reign'd in years of yore,
Propitious hear me, nor disdain
To let your echoes learn this strain;
Barbaric tho' my voice and rude,

notators, he has the sanction of the learned Mr. Heath. This was a deed expressive of the last despair; we have an instance of this in the siege of Thebes; and in the Persians, when Xerxes rends his robes, we hear of it enough, it completes the distress of his mother, and even of his father's shade; but in all these places the word used is either ἐρείκω, or ῥήγνυμι· an author is the best commentator on himself; wherever λακὶς is used by Æschylus, it signifies what the Latin language expresses by lacinia, and the English by lace or fringe: Persæ, l. 837. where this idea of rending the ornaments of dress is intended to be conveyed, σημοῤῥαγοῦσι is added to λακίδες. The Chorus here are not in a desperate situation, they had escaped from their persecutors, were safely landed in Greece, and had hopes of protection from the gods, to whose altars they were fled, and from the generous inhabitants of the Apian land, to which they address themselves for favour, though their voice and dress be barbaric, that is, shows them to be of a foreign country. Pelasgus speaks of them as

Gorgeously vested in barbaric stoles,
That float in many a fold;

where the word χλίοντα will not admit the idea of this supposed dilaceration.

Well may its notes be understood;
Barbaric tho' this purfled stole,
Frounc'd around with linen roll:
This blushing veil tho' Sidon gave,
Ye hills of Apis hear, and save!

The dashing oar, the swelling sail,
That caught the favourable gale,
Safe from the storms, nor I complain,
Wafted our frail bark o'er the main.
All-seeing sovereign sire, defend,
And guide us to a prosp'rous end;
Save us, O save the seed divine
Of our great mother's sacred line;
From man's rude touch O save us free,
And help insnared chastity!

Thou, virgin daughter of high Jove,
A virgin's vows hear, and approve;
Holding thy sober, awful state,
Protect us from the touch we hate;
From bold incontinence secure,
Pure thyself, preserve us pure;
Save us, O save the seed divine
Of our great mother's sacred line;
From man's rude touch O save us free,
And help insnared chastity!

If not, this glowing train, that trace
From Heav'n's high king their high-born race,
Shall voluntary victims go
To th' all-receiving realms below;
To their dread Gods for refuge fly,
If Heav'n's high pow'rs their aid deny.

O sovereign Jove, shall wrath divine
For Iö still pursue her line?
Still thy dread queen in fury rise,
And in her cause arm all the skies?
She wings these winds, this tempest spreads,
That bursts in vengeance o'er our heads.
O sovereign Jove, for this thy ear
No meed of grateful voice shall hear;
Thy son dishonour'd, whom of yore
To thee disfigur'd Iö bore.
Turn then, O turn thy gracious eye,
And hear us from thy throne on high!

DANAUS, CHORUS.

DAN. Daughters, this hour demands your utmost prudence;
Your father's care, your old and faithful pilot,
Hath held your helm safe o'er the dangerous deep;
Behoves you now at land with provident heed
To form your counsels, and attentive mark
My words. Yon' cloud of dust, tho' tongueless, speaks
An army nigh; I hear their wheels of brass
Loud rattling on their axles; now I view
Chariots and horse distinct, and shields, and spears
Far gleaming o'er the plain; the lords perchance
That rule these realms, inform'd of our arrival,
Advance to us; but bring they minds of peace,
Guiltless of violence, or with ruthless rage
Rush on this train, best sit together, virgins,
Around this altar sacred to the Gods*

* These gods were Jupiter as presiding over the Olympic games, Neptune as over the Isthmian, Apollo as institutor of the Pythian.

Instituit sacros celebri certamine ludos,
Pythia de domiti serpentis nomine dictos. Ov. Met.

and Mercury, who taught the graceful exercises of the Palæstra,

Presiding o'er the games: a surer refuge
Than tow'r or shield war-proof an altar gives.
Go then with speed, and reverent in your hands
Hold forth these supplicating branches crown'd
With snowy wreaths, ensigns of awful Jove.
With modest, grave, and decent speech receive
These strangers, as beseems the wretched state
Of unknown supplicants; declare at once
Distinct and brief the motives of your flight
Unstain'd with blood: let not your roving eye
Dart the bold glance, impeaching modesty.
Be not thy voice heard first, nor let its answers
Weary their ear; they quickly take offence;
Submissive urge thy plea, rememb'ring well
The pride of words ill suits thy low estate,
A fugitive, a stranger, in distress.

CHOR. Wise are thy counsels, and with reverend heed
Shall be remember'd, father; and may Jove,
The author of our race, look gracious on us.

DAN. Quick be his aid, strong guardian of our cause.

CHOR. Thus near I choose my seat.

DAN. Supreme of Gods,
Pity our suff'rings, pity e'er we perish.

CHOR. Look with an eye of mercy on thy suppliants,
Impart thy grace, and bless us with success.

DAN. Address you now this crested bird of Jove *.

Qui feros cultus hominum recentum
Voce formasti catus, et decoræ
More palæstræ.

* The image of Neptune is characterised by his Trident, which plainly declares the God; but this adjunct of Apollo is not so clear; Pausanias tells us, that the Grecians worshipped the Cock as sacred to Apollo, because he announces the rising of the sun. But further than this, they drew their auguries of success from this bird: thus the Bœotians formed a joyful presage of their glorious victory over the Lacedæmonians at Leuctra, from the crow-

CHOR. Thee, radiant Sun, thy tutelary rays
Streaming with gold, sacred Apollo, God
Once exil'd from the skies, to thee I call *,
Look on our woes, and pity wretched mortals.
DAN. O succour us, assist us, gracious pow'r.
CHOR. Whom of these Gods, whom yet shall we invoke?
DAN. Mark you this trident? It declares the God.
CHOR. Safe hast thou brought us o'er the swelling sea,
Receive us then, and save us on the shore.
DAN. This, in the Grecian rites, is Mercury †.
CHOR. Nothing but good announce thou to the free.
DAN. This common altar, sacred to these Gods,
Approach with awe; the ground is holy; sit
Like turtles trembling at the falcon's flight,
The winged foe of all the winged race,
Polluter of his kind; for how can bird,
That preys on bird, be pure? Or how can man,
That from th' unwilling father drags to marriage
Th' unwilling daughter, how can he be chaste?
Or shall the haughty deed e'en after death
Escape unpunish'd in the realms below?
No; for another Jove ‡, they say, holds there

ing of the cocks during all the preceding night; for the cock, when he has conquered his rival, proclaims his victory with loud and cheerful crowings; but if conquered, he hides himself in silence.—Verderii imagines deorum. See also Cicero de Divinatione, 1 L. xxxv.

* This is well put. Apollo was fabled to have been banished from heaven, because he killed the thunder-forging Cyclopes.

† Danaus does well to explain this image to his daughters; for in the Ægyptian rites Mercury was depicted with his caduceus and talaria indeed, but with the head of a dog, as the latrator Anubis.

‡ Not only the heavens, but the sea, and even the infernal regions had each their Jupiter; wherefore this god had an image among the Argives with three eyes, to denote his power over those three regions, which the an-

His awful seat, and to the guilty dead
Awards just vengeance. But be wary, try
The sanctity of the place: and may it bring
The blessing of success to crown your hopes.

PELASGUS, DANAUS, CHORUS.

PEL. What female train address we here, and whence,
Gorgeously vested in barbaric stoles
That float in many a fold? Our Argos sees not
Her daughters thus array'd, nor Greece thro' all
Its states. That thus without some previous herald,
The public hospitality not ask'd,
Without safe conduct, you have boldly ventur'd
To land upon our coasts, this is most strange.
Only these boughs, as supplicants are wont,
You lay before these Gods that o'er the games
Preside: hence Greece forms one conjecture only,
Of all besides uncertain what to think,
Till your distinct relation clears our doubts.

CHOR. As to our habits, thy remarks are just.
But how shou'd I address thee, as a man
Of private station, or with hallow'd charge
Presiding here, or chieftain of the state?

PEL. Nay, answer me, and speak with confidence.
Pelasgus bids you, sovereign of this land:
My sire Palæcthon, of high ancestry
Original with this earth: from me, their king,
The people take their name, and boast themselves
Pelasgians. O'er a wide extent of land,
Thro' which the Algus flows, and Strymon west,
From the Perrhæbians o'er the sacred heights
Of Pindus, to Pœonia, and beyond

cient mythology has divided between the three sons of Saturn.—Verderius from Pausanias.

The mountains of Dodona, spacious realms,
My empire stretches, bounded by the sea
This way. In ancient times the Apian plains
From Apis drew their honour'd name, the son
Of Phœbus, in his father's healing arts
Skill'd: from Naupactus came the heav'n-taught sage
And clear'd the land of that pestiferous brood*,
Which the moist earth, foul with corrupted gore,
Of old engender'd, fierce with dragon-rage,
A cruel neighbourhood; their horrible pride
The matchless Apis quell'd, and freed the land
Of Argos. Hence in sacred reverence
We hold his memory. Instructed thus
Say on, declare your race, and ought besides:
But know we brook not the long pomp of words.

CHOR. Brief will I be, and plain. Of Argive race
We boast ourselves, and draw our vaunted lineage
From her, the lowing mother, in her son
Supremely blest. All this my words shall prove.

PEL. Unplausible your tale. Can it be, strangers,
That you're of Argive race? Liker, I ween,
The Lybian damsels, in no wise resembling†

* We have in this history clear traces of another colony from Ægypt, whose chieftain Apis drove out the barbarous remains of the Ophite race.

† The ladies of ancient Greece, like the fair females that grace our happy country, were remarkable for that soft and delicate composition of colour, which consists of a fine red beautifully intermixed and incorporated with white: when Pelasgus therefore observed the glowing tints of these dames, he pronounces them not of Argive race, but readily derives them from some warmer clime. Mr. Addison, in his Cato, has expressed the same idea in these charming lines,

The glowing dames of Zama's royal court
Have faces flush'd with more exalted charms:
The sun, that rolls his chariot o'er their heads,
Works up more fire and colour in their cheeks.

Our daughters: such perchance the Nile might rear,
Such in the glowing tint the artist's hand
Might mark the Colchian dame; and such, I hear,
The wand'ring Indians, mounted on their camels,
Along the tented plains out-stretching wide
To Æthiopia's cities: such the troops
Of warlike Amazons; and were your hands
Arm'd with the polish'd bow, I might conjecture
You were of these; therefore I thirst to know
More fully, how you are of Argive race.

CHOR. Fame speaks of Iö, in this Argive land
The sacred guardian of the fane of Juno.
Her, as the common voice loudly reports——

PEL. Reports it that the Thunderer, of her charms
Enamour'd, with a mortal mix'd the god?

CHOR. And met in secret shades, conceal'd from June.

PEL. How ended then the bickerings of these pow'rs?

CHOR. The Argive queen transform'd her to an heifer.

PEL. Does Jove approach her in this fair-horn'd shape?

CHOR. Himself, they say, transforming to a bull.

PEL. What angry measures form'd his royal consort?

CHOR. An herdsman she assigned starr'd round with eyes.

PEL. What herdsman this, and how starr'd round with eyes?

CHOR. The earth-born Argus: but him Hermes slew.

PEL. What new device to vex the wretched heifer?

CHOR. A winged pest, arm'd with an horrid sting:
Those on the banks of Nile call it the brize.

PEL. And drove her in long wand'rings from this land.

CHOR. Thy words, according well, speak this for me.

PEL. Reach'd she Canobus, and the walls of Memphis?

CHOR. There Jove with gentle hand sooth'd her to rest;
There planted his illustrious progeny.

PEL. Who from this heifer boasts his race divine?

CHOR. Hence Epaphus receiv'd his name; from him

Libya, whose fair domains extended wide.

PEL. What other branch sprung from this mighty root?

CHOR. Belus, the father of two sons; my sire,
Behold, is one.

PEL. Declare the sage's name.

CHOR. Danaus: his brother, whom by name they call
Ægyptus, is the sire of fifty sons.
Thus have I shewn thee our high ancestry;
Protect us then, support an Argive train.

PEL. You seem indeed to draw your origin
Of old from hence: but say, how have you dar'd
To leave your father's house? What chance constrain'd you?

CHOR. King of Pelasgia, various are the ills *
Of mortal man; and never may'st thou see
Misfortune mounting on the self-same wing.
Who wou'd have thought we shou'd have wing'd our flight
Thus unexpected to the coast of Argos
Allied of old, amazement in our van,
And strong abhorrence of the nuptial bed!

PEL. Why, say'st thou, fly you to these Gods for refuge,
Holding these fresh-cropt branches crown'd with wreaths?

CHOR. That to the offspring of Ægyptus we
Might not be slaves.

PEL. Whence this reluctance, say,
From hate? Or do your laws forbid such nuptials?

* The address of these virgins here deserves our attention: their father, knowing the quick and volatile temper of the Grecians, had warned them not to let their answers weary the ear; Pelasgus had given them the same admonition; hence the Chorus says, "brief will I be, and plain:" and thus far indeed all her replies have a modest brevity and precision; here a trying question had been put to her, which could not be evaded; but as her success depended on the reception her answer should meet with, she awakes the attention of the king by a fine moral sentiment, and having thus prepared his mind gives him a direct answer, by applying the force of it to her own case. There is exquisite art in this.

CHOR. And who wou'd wish to make their friends their lords?
PEL. Yet thus the strength of families gains force.
CHOR. And to the wretched death is not unwelcome.
PEL. In what wou'd you engage my honour to you?
CHOR. Not to inthral us to Ægyptus' sons,
Shou'd they demand us.
PEL. Arduous is the task
Thou woud'st enjoin me, to provoke new wars.
CHOR. O'er him, that succours, Justice holds her shield.
PEL. If from the first the cause were my concern.
CHOR. Revere these Gods, the guardians of your state,
Encircled with this supplicating train.
PEL. Struck with religious horror I behold
These branches shade this consecrated seat.
CHOR. Dread then the wrath of Jove, who guards the suppliant.
Son of Palæcthon, hear me; with an heart
Prompt to relieve, king of Pelasgia, hear.
Behold me supplicant, an exile, wand'ring,
Like the poor lamb, that on the craggy steep
Raises her mournful voice, secure of help,
And warns her faithful keeper of her danger.
PEL. I see a stranger train, with boughs new pluck'd
Shading these Gods that o'er the games preside.
May their arrival, tho' now strangers here,
Yet hence descended, bring no dread event;
Nor from this sudden, unexpected hap
Let war, which least we wish, disturb our state.
CHOR. May Themis, guardian of the suppliant, sprung
From pow'rful Jove, look on our harmless flight.
Nor from a younger let thy age disdain
To learn the reverence due to supplicants,
From whose pure hands the fav'ring Gods accep
The grateful offering.
PEL. Make not your request

To me in private: if pollution stains
The public state, the public has the charge
To expiate that stain; nor can my voice,
E'er consultation with the people held,
Warrant the sanction of the public faith.

CHOR. Thou art the state; the public thou; thy voice,
Superior to control, confirms the sanction
This altar gives; thy sole authority,
High-sceptr'd monarch of a sovereign throne,
Is here obey'd: religion's voice pleads for us;
Revere it, nor profane these hallow'd seats.

PEL. That profanation to mine enemies.
To grant you my protection cannot be
But with much danger; to reject your pray'rs,
Humanity forbids: perplex'd I fear
To act, or not to act, and fix my choice.

CHOR. On Heav'n's high throne he sits, whose watchful eye
Regards th' afflicted, when unfeeling pride
Denies that justice which the law asks for them.
Reverence his pow'r; for when the sufferer groans
With pangs unpitied, the fix'd wrath of Jove,
Protector of the suppliant, burns severe *.

PEL. If by your country's laws Ægyptus' sons,
As next of blood, assert a right in you,
Who shou'd oppose them? It behoves thee then
By your own laws to prove such claim unjust.

CHOR. Ah never may I be perforce a thrall
To man! By heav'n-directed flight I break

* There is great propriety in this plea, to which Pelasgus was naturally led by Grecian ideas, arising from the laws of that country where orphan virgins were to marry their nearest of kin, and such were ordered to take them to wife:

Lex est, ut orbæ, qui sint genere proximi,
Eis nubant: et illos ducere eadem hæc lex jubet.

TER. PHORM.

The wayward plan of these detested nuptials.
Arm justice on thy side, and with her aid
Judge with that sanctity the Gods demand.

PEL. No easy province: make not me your judge.
Great tho' my power, it is not mine to act*,
I told thee so, without my people's voice
Assenting; lest, if ill arise, they say
By honouring strangers thou hast undone thy country.

CHOR. Each equally allied, impartial Jove
Weighs each in equal balance; but repays
The impious deed with vengeance, to the just
Rewards their sanctity. Why griev'st thou then
To emulate the God, and act with justice?

PEL. Matter of high import hast thou propos'd,
Which not admits heady and fitful rashness,
But deep deliberation, provident care,
Wisely attentive to the general weal,
That hence no evil rise, but the event
Be prosp'rous found, first, to the state and me;
Next, that no force arrest you here, nor we
Betray you refug'd in these hallow'd seats,
The hostages of Heav'n and on our heads
Call ruin and the vengeance of the Gods,

* The Athenians, and indeed all the states of Greece, were animated with the noblest and most generous spirit of liberty, and the strongest abhorrence of a tyrant; for by that name they denoted the man who had usurped the supreme power, and turned the free democracy into a monarchy.

Non quia crudelis ille, sed quoniam grave
Omne insuetis onus.

Nay, proud as they were of their own ancient kings, they could not bear to allow them a power inconsistent with their free laws, the right which every citizen claimed of giving his voice in the public council, and adding his sanction to the measures which the king was to carry into execution, only in obedience to the will of the people. We have many instances of this generous enthusiasm.

That e'en in death acquits not. Seems not this
Matter of deep debate, and public care?

CHOR. Deliberate then with prudent care:
To thy counsels take with thee
Heav'n-commercing piety,
And be stedfast justice near.
Hark! methinks I hear them say,
Do not, mighty king, betray
Wretched exiles wand'ring far.
See me not with ruffian hand,
Refug'd at this shrine, profan'd,
Learn what boist'rous man may dare.
See me not with ruffled vest *
Rent unseemly from my breast,
Loose my tresses waving round,
Bridled with this golden brede,
Led, like a reluctant steed,
From the Gods that guard this ground.
See each hallow'd image here,
And the awful pow'rs revere:
At thy feet thy suppliant laid,
Mighty monarch hear and aid!
And know, to thee, thy house, thy rising race
Impartial justice shall repay the deed;
With glory's radiant crown thy virtues grace,
And righteous Jove shall sanctify the meed.

PEL. Well; I have paus'd, and ponder'd; but each thought
Tells me the fluctuating tide perforce
Will drive me on a war with these, or those;
And, like a ship with all its anchors out,

* This passage confirms the observations on the word λακὶς in the former ode. Mr. Heath here translates πολυμίτων πέπλων by peplorum multis liciis textorum: and indeed these ladies seem to have been very elegantly dressed, and to be conscious enough of it.

I must abide the storm: nor will this end
Without calamity, and loss, and woe.
When the rich house in desolation sinks,
Its wealth all wasted, bounteous Jove may raise
Its splendor to outshine its former state:
Or when the haughty tongue unseemly bolts
The bitter taunt that stings the anguish'd heart,
The balm of honied words may heal the wound.
But kindred blood to reek upon the dust—
No: let the altars blaze, and each due rite
Propitiate ev'ry God t' avert the ill
Meanwhile I keep aloof, wishing t' appear
Ignorant of these disputes: and may th' event
Be fortunate beyond my expectation.

CHOR. Hear the last words of desperate modesty.

PEL. Have I not heard? Speak on, I will attend.

CHOR. Seest thou these braided zones that bind our robes?

PEL. Ornaments these that suit your female state.

CHOR. Know then the honest purpose these shall serve.

PEL. What wou'd thy words intend? Explain thyself.

CHOR. If honour shall not guard this female train—

PEL. How can these binding zones secure your safety?

CHOR. Hanging new trophies on these images.

PEL. Mysterious are thy words; speak plainly to me.

CHOR. To tell thee plainly then, I mean ourselves.

PEL. I hear the language of an anguish'd heart.

CHOR. Be sure of that; I speak our firm resolves.

PEL. On ev'ry side inevitable ills
Surround me, like a flood whose dang'rous surge
Drives me into a vast and gulfy sea,
Where no kind harbour shelters from the storm.
Shou'd I not yield you refuge, thou hast nam'd
A deed of horror not to be surpass'd:
If with Ægyptus' sons, whose veins are rich

With kindred blood, before our walls I try
The chance of war, what else, but bitter loss
Can be th' event, when in a woman's cause
Men shed their warm blood on th' embattled plain?
Yet strong constraint compels me to revere
The wrath of Jove, whose hospitable pow'r
Protects the suppliant, awfully severe.
And thou, age-honour'd father of these virgins,
Take in thy hands these boughs, place them with speed
On other altars of our country Gods;
That all the citizens may see the signs
Of your arrival; but of me be sure
Speak not a word: for this free people love
To tax authority with blame. Some eye
Perchance may melt with pity, and abhor
The boist'rous force of these injurious men;
Hence shall you find more favour from the people;
For nature prompts to succour the distress'd.

DAN. This reverend, this benevolent regard
To strangers we receive with grateful honour.
But from thy train send with me some t' attend,
To guide me to the altars of your Gods,
The guardians of your state, and to their shrines,
With safety thro' your streets; for much unlike
Our form, our garb to yours; nor does our Nile
See on its banks a race like those, that tread
The verdant borders of your Inachus:
Hence insolence may dare the rude affront;
The stranger friend by the friend's hand has bled.

PEL. Attend him; he says well; conduct his steps
Safe to the sacred shrines, seats of the Gods,
Within our walls; and, as you pass, avoid
Much talk with those you meet, guiding this stranger,
Who claims protection from our hallow'd altars.

PELASGUS, CHORUS.

CHOR. For him thou hast order'd well; safe may he go
Appointed thus: but what becomes of me?
What shall I do? How wilt thou calm my fears?
PEL. Leave here those boughs, the ensigns of your toils.
CHOR. I leave them, as thy voice and hand directs.
PEL. Seest thou that unfenc'd grove? Take shelter there *.
CHOR. How shou'd th' unconsecrated grove protect me?
PEL. Let them have wings, we leave you not their prey.
CHOR. Than winged dragons they're more dreadful to us.
PEL. With better omens be thy words auspicious †.
CHOR. No marvel if my mind sinks with its fears.
PEL. But a king's fear is omenous of ill.
CHOR. Be all thy words, be all thy actions happy!
PEL. Your father will not long be absent from you
Meanwhile will I persuade th' assembled people,
If haply I may move them, to receive you;
With gen'rous pity: him will I instruct
How best t' address his speech. Await th' event,
And supplicate the Gods, whose guardian pow'r
Is worshipp'd here, to grant your hearts' warm wish.
This done, I will return; and may persuasion

* The sacred groves were enclosed; the Chorus therefore properly asks what protection an unconsecrated grove could afford: the answer shows, that the state would defend them, and they needed not that hallowed asylum; yet as the danger came upon them before they could be removed by a decree of the state, they fled for refuge to the sacred grove.

† It is well known that the ancients were very superstitious with regard to well or ill omened words. Tully gives us some curious recitals in his book on divination. Nothing can be more inauspicious than a winged dragon; the mention of it was therefore of ill omen: the Chorus excuse themselves as being depressed with *fear*; this was another ill-omened word, especially when addressed to a king; they recover themselves with this auspicious wish, Be all thy words, be all thy actions happy! which shows that εὔφρανε cannot be taken actively for animum mihi exhilera.

Attend me, and good fortune speed my steps.

CHORUS.

STRO. 1. Might of the mighty, king of kings,
Supremely blest amidst the blest above,
Inthron'd in glory, righteous Jove,
From whom perfection to the perfect springs,
Hear us, O hear our fond request,
To pity melt each gen'rous breast;
View this bold outrage with indignant eye,
And shield us from the injury:
O'ertake their proud bark on the purple main,
Sink it with all its sable train;
Our female band with pity view, [drew.
And think from whose rich blood our honour'd race we

ANTIS. 1. If Argive Iö's blooming grace
Cou'd e'er thy fond enamour'd bosom move
To warm desire, and rapt'rous love,
The pleasing memory of her charms retrace.
From her our race divine we boast,
Not foreign to this Argive coast.
Her foot, in times of old, where now we tread,
Trod the flow'r-enamell'd mead;
And made with lowings loud the forests ring,
As from the brize's tort'ring sting
O'er many a realm she wander'd wide, [divide*.
And dar'd the bounding waves, that world from world

STRO. 2. Found her foot rest on Asia's shore,
On pastoral Phrygia's, or on Lydia's plains,
Or Mysian Teuthra's wide domains?
Wildly Cilicia's rugged mountains o'er,
Pamphilia's various tribes among,
Each ceaseless-flowing stream along,

* Alluding to the passage of the Bosphorus, which divides Europe from Asia.

Thro' corn-clad fields, and vallies ever green,
The hallow'd haunts of beauty's queen,
That winged pest impell'd her foot to rove,
To the divine, all fost'ring grove,
Thro' whose rich meads, impregn'd with snow *,
Temper'd with torrid beams Nile's healthful waters flow.

ANTIS. 2. The race that then possess'd the land,
Struck with astonishment and pale affright,
Beheld the strange, prodigious sight:
Disdaining to be touch'd she trod the strand,
The likeness of the lowing race
Now soft'ning sweet to virgin grace †:
They saw, and trembled. All her toils at last,
Her wand'rings wild, her tortures past,
What gentle hand—Eternal Lord 'twas thine;
Thy gentle hand, thy pow'r divine ‡,
Sooth'd, softly sooth'd her frantic fear,
And from her glowing cheek wip'd sorrow's modest tear.

* The most ancient opinion was, that the Nile proceeded from the snow dissolving in the mountains of the Upper Æthiopia; this is mentioned by Anaxagoras, Æschylus, and Euripides. "Than the waters whereof there is "none more sweet; being not unpleasantly cold, and of all others the most "wholesome. Confirmed by that answer of Pescennius Niger to his mur- "muring soldiers, What? crave you wine, when you have the Nilus to drink "of? Such is it in being so concocted by the sun, at all times in some part "directly over it; and by length of course, running from south to north "(besides in ambages) above one and forty degrees, &c." SANDYS.

† The poet here, by taking Iö under her change from the heifer to her own natural form, has given us the precise image of the Ægyptian Isis, who was represented as a most elegant woman with lunar horns on her head.—See Verder, Mr. Bryant, and particularly Histoire du Ciel.

‡ Jupiter restored Iö to her former shape, and with his gentle hand soothed her to peace: hence their illustrious son had the name of Epaphus, ἀπὸ τῆς ἐπαφῆς.

APOD. Now thy pleasing force employ,
All be love, and all be joy.
Rising from the sweet embrace,
Worthy of his radiant race,
Smiles the auspicious boy.
Time prepares to stamp his name
Glorious in the roll of fame;
Earth, thro' ev'ry raptur'd scene,
Hails th' ethereal son of Jove.
Who cou'd charm Heav'n's angry queen?
Who her hostile hate remove?
This the deed of Jove alone,
And this his genuine son.
To whom, for justice when I raise the strain,
To whom, save Jove, shou'd I complain?
Great, awful author of our ancient line,
Creative parent, independent lord,
Disposer of the world, righteous, benign,
Sovereign, above the highest high ador'd;
Whene'er he deigns to grace some favour'd head,
Easy alike to him the will, the word, the deed.

DANAUS, CHORUS.

DAN. Be of good courage, daughters; a decree,
Such as you wish, this gen'rous state has pass'd.
CHOR. Dear to my soul, with grateful tidings fraught,
Hail, reverend parent! But inform us how
Pass'd the decree; what numbers favour'd us?
DAN. Not one discordant voice jarr'd in their councils.
The fire of youth glow'd in these aged veins,
When the whole people their uplifted hands
Wav'd in the air, to witness their assent
That we might be permitted here to dwell
Free, unreclaimable, inviolate:

That none presume, native or stranger, hence
To lead us; and shou'd force be us'd, whoe'er
Assists not, him the public sentence drives,
With infamy, an exile from his country.
This the Pelasgian king advis'd, to us
Benevolent, declaring the fierce wrath
Of Jove, protector of the supplicant,
Cou'd not permit this firm and prosp'rous state
To flourish; but such double insult, offer'd
To ev'ry law of hospitality
Sacred and civil, wou'd with twofold vengeance
Draw ruin on it. When the Argives heard
These arguments of winning eloquence,
Impatient of the usual forms, they gave
With hands uplifted their concordant suffrage
Friendly to us: thus Jove decreed th' event.

CHOR. Come then, my sisters, for these pious Argives
Breathe we some pious pray'r, whose solemn strain
May reach the ear of Jove. And thou, Supreme,
God of the stranger, hear a stranger's voice
Sincere, unblam'd; and ratify our vows!

STRO. Ye progeny of Jove, whose awful pow'r
In yon ethereal plain
Fixes the glories of your reign,
Bend from your radiant seats your ear,
Attentive to a virgin's pray'r,
And on this gen'rous race your choicest blessings show'r.
Never may war, whose wanton rage
The thund'ring falchion joys to wield,
Joys, when embattled hosts engage,
To mow with ruthless arm the field;
Never with rude discordant roar
Affright the echoes of this shore;
Never with hostile hand

Wave round these glitt'ring tow'rs the blazing brand.
Soft-ey'd humanity dwells here,
That melting to the suppliant's tear
Asserts our hopeless cause;
And spotless piety, whose breast
Submiss reveres Jove's high behest,
And hospitable laws.
Your sacred spirit inspires the free
To form the gen'rous, bold decree,
A man's rude force disdain;
To cast on Heav'n's dread Lord their eye,
The terrors of his vengeance fly,
Nor scorn our female train:
He o'er the impious roof his thunders rolls*,
And awful in his wrath appals the guilty souls.

ANTIS. Our kindred train, suppliants of holy Jove,
Pelasgia's sons revere,
And make our wrongs their gen'rous care.
For this at ev'ry hallow'd shrine
Propitious be each pow'r divine;
For this beneath this solemn-shaded grove
Our raptur'd invocations rise,
And Heav'n shall hear the pious strains.
Ah! never may malignant skies
Blast the fresh glories of your plains:
Nor pestilence with pois'nous breath,
Waste your thin towns with livid death:
Nor war's stern pow'r deface
The blooming flow'rs that youth's fair season grace.
Still may your chiefs, a reverend band,
Around the hallow'd altars stand;
And ardent for the state

* We are indebted to the acumen of Pauw for bringing this sublime idea to light.

Pour the warm vow to Heav'n's high Lord,
The great, the just; whose will ador'd
With hoar law tempers fate *.
Still rise new chiefs, a lengthen'd line,
(Kind on their birth, Diana, shine!)
The brave, the wise, the good:
But never discord's dread alarms
Your madd'ning cities rouse to arms,
And stain your streets with blood:
Nor pale disease her sickly dews display,
Touch'd by thy golden beams, ambrosial fount of day.

EPOD. Fav'ring seasons grace the year,
Crown with rich fruits your cultur'd plains;
The joyful flock, the sportive steer,
Bound wanton o'er your wide domains.
Each immortal show'ring treasures,
Wake the soft melodious measures;
Let the chastely-warbled lay
The muses' rapture-breathing shell obey.
Firm may the honours of your laws remain,
And prudence in your counsels reign:
Just to yourselves, and to the stranger kind,
May peace to sleep consign the bloodless sword;
Each honour to your country's Gods assigned;
Each laurell'd shrine with hallow'd rites ador'd;
The parent's hoary head with reverence crown'd;
View this, ye righteous Gods, and stretch protection round!

DANAUS, CHORUS.

DAN. I like this well; wise are these votive strains.

* Hoar law, an elegant expression to which the cana fides of the Latins corresponds. Jupiter is now addressed as the just and righteous king, and therefore governing by the ancient laws of heaven.

But tho' your father brings unwelcome tidings,
New, and unlook'd for, fear not you th' event.
From yon high mound, where first you suppliant stood,
I saw a ship, I mark'd its waving streamer,
Its swelling sails, and all its gallant trim:
Its prow with heedful eye observes its way,
Obedient to the helm that guides behind;
Unfriendly sight! the sailors too I mark'd,
Conspicuous in white robes their sable limbs *.
Th' attendant vessels, proudly riding, sweep
The wat'ry way; she foremost near the land
Now furls her sails, and all the shouting crew
Bend to the eager oar. Behoves you now
Sedate and sage attention, nor neglect
These Gods. I haste to bring their gen'rous aid,
The patrons, the protectors of your cause.
Haply some herald may be sent, with charge
To claim you as their prize: it shall not be:
Fear not th' event: but shou'd our aid come slow,
Forget not the protection of this place.
Be comforted: the day, the hour shall come,
When he, that dares affront the Gods, shall feel
Their chast'ning vengeance bursting on his head.

CHOR. How my frame trembles! Ah, my father, see
With winged speed the ships arrive; between
No interval of time: my stiff'ning limbs
Are chain'd with fear, and ev'ry hope of safety,
If safety lies in flying far, is lost.

DAN. Since this decree is pass'd, fear not, my child;
Argos, I know, will arm in your defence.

CHOR. Fatally fierce they are, and on their pride

* It had been observed before, that the Ægyptian rowers were a sable train.

Destruction waits, and never-sated war,
These sons of old Ægyptus, not to thee
Unknown: E'en now their firm-compacted ships
Black o'er the angry deep insulting ride,
Eager to land their sable-tinctur'd hosts.

DAN. And they shall find an host, whose toil-strung arms *
Relax not in the sun's meridian heat.

CHOR. Forsake me not, ah, leave me not alone,
I pray thee, father; a forsaken woman
Is very weak: their wily, faithless minds,
Like obscene crows, spare not the hallow'd altar.

DAN. Now fair befal our cause, if their mad rage,
Insulting thee, my child, insults the Gods.

CHOR. Neither these tridents, nor this solemn scene
Will awe them to refrain their impious hands.
They scorn the Gods, and with unhallow'd force
Rush madly on, like savage, rav'ning dogs.

DAN. But dogs, they say, yield to the mast'ring wolves †;
And the soft reed to the firm spiked corn.

CHOR. They have the force of wild and savage beasts;
We must escape them therefore, as we may.

DAN. Slow are th' advances of a naval train;
Slow the arrangements of the ships; the care
To fix the cables, slow; th' experienc'd chiefs
Trust not too soon the biting anchor's hold,

* The gymnastic exercises of the Grecians, to which they were all trained, formed their bodies to this firmness; it is intended here as a sarcasm on the Ægyptians, who are supposed to melt beneath the noon-tide heat.

† As the Chorus had compared the sons of Ægyptus to ravening dogs, Danaus expresses the Grecians by wolves, as stronger and fiercer animals; perhaps it would be too great a refinement, with Stanley, to derive the former allusion from their Anubis, and the latter from the Apollo Λύκειος. The comparison is continued in the next line, where the papyrus, whose root was a common ood in Ægypt, is despised as inferior to the corn of Greece,

If station'd where no harbour winds around:
And when the golden sun withdraws his beams,
The gloom of night brings many an anxious care;
Nor dare they, till their vessels ride secure,
Attempt to land. But take thou heed, nor let
Thy fears impel thee to neglect the Gods;
But ask their aid. The state will not disdain
My age, that tells with youthful warmth its tidings.

CHORUS.

STRO. 1. Ye rising hills, whose reverend heads
Majestic wave their awe-commanding shades,
What woes our shudd'ring souls await?
Or flying on the wings of fear,
In some cavern dark and drear
Deep shall we plunge, and hide us from our fate?
Oh that I cou'd as smoke arise,
That rolls its black wreaths thro' the air;
Mix with the clouds, that o'er the skies
Show their light forms, and disappear:
Or like the dust be tost
By ev'ry sportive wind, till all be lost!

ANTIS. 1. Such thoughts in deep despair I roll,
The gloom of sorrow black'ning on my soul.
Ah father, the vex'd ocean round
What horrors struck thy aching sight?
Dismay, and pale affright,
And wild amazement sink me to the ground.
Shall then the base, detested band
With rude touch seize us for their own?
No: rather shall this daring hand
Prepare for death the conscious zone;
Rather in deep disdain
My pale shade sink to Pluto's dreary reign.

STRO. 2. Oh might I sit sublime in air,
Where wat'ry clouds the freezing snows prepare!
Or on a rock whose threat'ning brow,
Th' aerial vulture's unreach'd seat,
In solitary state
Frowns ruinous o'er th' affrighted waste below:
Roll'd headlong down its rugged side,
A mangled carcass let me lie,
E'er dragg'd a pale, unwilling bride,
Victim to sad necessity;
And my indignant heart
Feel the keen wounds of sorrow's tort'ring dart.

ANTIS. 2. Throw me, e'er that detested day,
To prowling dogs and rav'nous birds a prey.
No form of death affrights me now:
O thou, assign'd the wretches' friend,
To bid his miseries end,
And in oblivion's balm to steep his woe;
Come, gentle death, e'er that sad hour
Which drags me to the nuptial bed;
And let me find in thy soft pow'r
A refuge from the force I dread;
O spread thy sable cloud,
And in its unpierc'd gloom our sorrows shroud!

EPOD. Higher let your voices rise,
And swell the choral descant to the skies,
Notes of such a lofty vein,
That Gods may listen to the solemn strain!
Eternal Sire, from Heav'n's high throne,
If thy indignant eye-balls glows
With vengeance at foul deeds below,
Look down, thou Sovereign of the World, look down:
Ægyptus' sons, a ruffian race,
Our flying footsteps chase;

And on our trembling, weeping band
Advance to lay their vengeful hand:
Extend thy golden scales,
For without thee what mortal worth avails?
By land, by sea,
They seek their prey;
Oh, e'er they seize it, may the ruffians die!
Again I raise the mournful cry.
They come, they come, the haughty foes:
These are but preludes to my woes,
To yon strong rampires bend your flight;
By sea, by land they rush severe,
And with their stern and threat'ning air,
The softness of our sex affright.
Look down, thou Sovereign of the World, and save!

HERALD, CHORUS.

HER. Hence to the ship, hence with your utmost speed *.
CHOR. No, never, never; drag me, drag me, stab me,
Rend from these mangled limbs my bleeding head.
HER. Hence to the ship, abandon'd wretches, hence,
That waits to waft you, with your injur'd lords,
O'er the wide billows of yon briny deep.
Haste, or this spear, with bridal garlands bound †,

* The timid modesty of these virgins, and the sober piety of Danaus, are finely contrasted with the brutal insolence and sacrilegious violence of the Ægyptian herald: this carries the distress to its greatest height, raises our pity and terror, and adds a peculiar lustre to the calm dignity of Pelasgus in the next scene.

† Pauwii conjecturâ νυμφοδέτῳ δορι, hasta quæ sponso geritur, et cui annexa est sponsi causa, conjecturas, omnes quascunque hactenus vidi mirâ suâ suavitate longe longeque superat. But the translator is not to be bantered out of this reading by the Attic wit, nor to be beat out of it by the γυμφοδέτῳ δορι, the σκηπτρῳ ηλοισι πεπαρμενῳ Heathii. This whole scene is so diffi-

Taught a less gentle office, there shall place you
Smarting with many a wound; there sit, and sigh.
No more, I charge you, of these froward moods,
Or force shall drive them from you.

CHOR. Woe is me!

HER. Haste, quit these seats, haste to the ships, and go
Inviolate to the city of the pious.

CHOR. Ah, never may these eyes again behold
That rich enlivening stream, which he who drinks
Feels his fresh blood dance lively in his veins.
My unpolluted life amidst these seats,
These sacred seats, old man, preserve me sacred.

HER. Nay, tell not me; but to the ship, the ship,
Averse or not averse, quick shalt thou go;
Or vengeance, chast'ning vengeance to thy feet
Add wings, and up the bark's tall sides pursue thee.

CHOR. Ah woe, woe, woe! Barbarian, may the winds
In all their fury hurl thee on the rocks
Of rough Cilicia's brow; or dash thy corse
An outcast on the swelling sands beneath.

HER. Cry, shriek, invoke the Gods; yet shalt thou not
Escape the ship of Ægypt; louder shriek,
Cry woe, and woe: if the name please thee, take it.

CHOR. Ah wretched me! Pollution of the land,
How fierce he yells! Insolent wretch, away,
Thy rude touch wounds me: For this ruffian force,
Rise, mighty Nile, whelm him beneath thy floods!

HER. Hence, I command you, to the rolling vessel
Instantly hence: if one presumes to linger,

cult, and so miserably mutilated, that the reader of Æschylus is under the greatest obligations to Pauw for his free and manly conjectures. If he has not alwsys hit on the true reading, he has at least given a probable and ingenious one, and added sense and spirit to that rude and undigested mass, from which none before had been extunded,

I pay no reverence to your crisped locks,
This hand perforce shall drag her by her tresses.

CHOR. Ah me, immortal Sire! Insolent Force
Will hurry me away: it drags me now
Entangled in its nets; and all my hopes
Are vanish'd like a dream, a dusky dream.
Earth, I adjure thee, shield me; shield me, Jove,
God of this land; save me in this hard conflict.

HER. Gods of this land! They awe not me; my youth
They nourish'd not, nor to old age upheld me.

CHOR. Near me the serpent rolls his train, and soon
Will, like a pois'nous viper, dart upon me.
Earth, I adjure thee shield me; shield me, Jove,
God of this land; save me in this hard conflict.

HER. If one of you perversely lingers here,
Your richly purfled stoles shall find no mercy.

CHOR. Ye rulers of the city, Force o'erpow'rs me.

HER. You shall see many rulers, doubt not, soon,
Ægyptus' sons; no anarchy is here.

CHOR. Unlook'd for ruin comes, O king, upon us.

HER. I must use force, I see, and pluck you hence
Dragg'd by the locks, since my words move you not.

PELASGUS, HERALD, CHORUS.

PEL. Whence these outrageous deeds? How dares thy pride
Offer this insult to the land, where dwell
Pelasgian men? Or didst thou deem that women
Alone inhabit here? Thy savage acts,
Barbarian, touch the dignity of Greece.
Learn thy mistake then, and thine high offence.

HER. Against what law, what right have I offended?

PEL. First, dost thou know thou art a stranger here?

HER. A stranger here I found what I had lost.

PEL. To whom hast thou address'd thee for protection?

HER. To Mercury, who directs the stranger's search.
PEL. The Gods! Thou hast no reverence for the Gods.
HER. Yes, for the Gods of Nile, an holy reverence.
PEL. But none for these, if right I understand thee.
HER. These lead I hence; and who shall take them from me?
PEL. Dare but to touch them, dear shalt thou abide it.
HER. Is this your hospitality to strangers?
PEL. I owe the ruffian none, that robs the Gods.
HER. Go then, announce this to Ægyptus' sons.
PEL. It suits not me; my soul disdains the office.
HER. Then let me speak, and plainly; it becomes
An herald's office to speak all things plain.
How ruffians, say, how robbers of the Gods,
This kindred train, that comes to claim these women?
Not by the voice of evidence does Mars
Decide these things *; nor for a mulct of gold
Compound the dreadful quarrel; e'er it ends
Many shall shed their dear blood in the dust,
Many lie low on earth, and bite the ground.
PEL. Hear then what honour prompts, what justice dictates,
And bear it to the partners of thy voyage.
If these approve, if their free will incline them,
Lead them, if gentle words win their assent.
This firm decree the suffrage of the state
Has render'd sacred, not by force to yield
A train of females; this resolve, be sure,

* Pelasgus had before gently rebuked the herald for the impropriety of his conduct; he had landed on a foreign shore, and advanced without asking the protection of any of the natives, and without reverencing the sanctity of the place; he rudely answers, I found here what I had lost, and I will seize it: being commanded not to touch the virgins, he has recourse to his sacred office, and promises to explain himself clearly; but instead of this abruptly declares, that Mars decides not by evidence, and at once threatens war: this is a strong mark of the impetuous and lawless violence of the sons of Ægyptus. Perhaps the critical taste of Pauw may be acknowledged in this remark.

Is strongly fix'd, and never can be shaken.
Tho' not engrav'd on tablets, nor enroll'd
In seal-stamp'd volumes, my free voice declares it
In words of plainest import. Take thy answer;
Hence from my sight, with thy best speed be gone.

HER. Know then a rising war awaits thy choice;
Valour and conquest crown the helms of men.

PEL. You shall be met by men, whose lively blood
Dull draughts of barley wine have never clogg'd *.
Now virgins, with your train of faithful friends,
Dismiss your fears; enter this town, whose walls
Strong-built, and crown'd with many a bulwark, lift
Their tow'red heads impregnable: within
The state has many structures; nor is mine
A thin inhabitation; such an house,
Where cheerful numbers live in wealth and splendor,
May haply please you: if a private mansion,
To your own use devote, be more your wish;
The best of these, the most approv'd, is yours;
Make your free choice: I will protect you; all
This friendly state, supporting their decree,
Will shield you. What, wish you more pow'rful guardians?

CHOR. For these thy bounties may the bounteous Gods
Show'r blessings on thy head, thou gen'rous king
Of brave Pelasgia! But benevolent
Send us our father Danaus, on whose firm

* That benevolent conqueror Osiris, whose military expeditions were undertaken with a view of instructing mankind in planting, sowing, and the useful arts of civilized life, with great care introduced the vine, wherever the soil was adapted to its growth; where it was not, as particularly in Ægypt, he taught the inhabitants the use of ferment, and showed them the way to make a wine of barley little inferior to the juice of the grape.—See Bryant's Analysis, vol. ii. p. 59. This liquor Pelasgus holds in contempt compared with the rich and generous wines of Greece.

And provident counsels we rely. His care
And sage advice is needful, where to choose
Our dwelling, our secure retreat. The tongue
Of Slander is too prompt with wanton malice
To wound the stranger: Act we then with caution.

PEL. With honour, lovely virgins, with the voice
Of fair-applauding fame amidst our city
Shall your appointment be, where'er your father
Assigns to each her mansion and attendants.

DANAUS, CHORUS.

DAN. Daughters, it well becomes you to these Argives,
As to th' immortal Gods, to offer vows,
Libation, sacrifice, and ev'ry rite
Religion knows; so liberal their protection,
So readily they lent their friendly ears,
And favour'd all my deeds against these youths, [you.
These kindred youths, whose headlong pride thus haunts
Behold these spears around, to me assign'd
An honourable guard, that no rude hand
With barb'rous rage may lift the secret sword,
And with my blood pollute the pious land.
This grace, this condescension claims my thanks,
And you with grateful minds honour it ever.
To all the wise instructions of your father,
Grav'd in your faithful tablets, grave these also;
That after-times may hold this stranger train
In reverence. Know then this, The tongue of malice
Is ever prompt to wound the stranger's fame
With stings of infamy: I charge you then
Disgrace me not. I see your blooming age,
Enforcing soft desire; I know how hard
To guard the lovely flow'rs that grace that season.

Beasts love to riot on their sweets *, and man,
Each insect, and each wanton-winged bird.
The Queen of Love proclaims their opening bloom;
Ah, wou'd she suffer it to remain uncropt!
And on the delicate tints, that kindling glow
On beauty's vermeil cheek, each roving youth
With melting wishes darts the amorous glance.
We brook not this: else why these various toils,
These wand'rings o'er the wide-extended main?
Let us not work this scandal to ourselves,
And triumph to our foes. Two mansions here
Are offer'd to your choice; Pelasgus one
Wou'd give, and one the state; beneath whose roof
No male attendant waits: the choice is easy.
Only observe these precepts of your father,
And guard with heedful care your virgin honour.

CHOR. O may the pow'rs of Heav'n in all besides
Be gracious to us; in our virgin honour
Have confidence: be their high wills unchang'd,
I shall not deviate from my mind's fix'd plan.

CHORUS.

Go then, ye pure, ye pious train,
In triumph go to those bless'd pow'rs,
That o'er this state extend their reign
Imperial guardians of these tow'rs;
Imperial guardians of these glades,
Along whose hallow'd shades
His dark'ning stream old Erasinus rolls:
With courage arm your souls.

* The force of love through all the animal creation is here finely described: Lucretius seems to have it in his eye in that exquisitely beautiful address to Venus with which he opens his poem: but the chaste regard to decorum, which breathes through the admonition of Danaus, deserves to be written in letters of gold.

No more to Nile's deep floods belong
The warbled voice, the raptur'd song *;
Our praise Pelasgia's towns demand;
And each fresh fount that loves to lead
His humid train thro' grove, thro' mead,
And rolls luxuriance thro' the land.
Virgin Diana, bend thine eye,
And piteous of a virgin's woes,
O save ensnared chastity,
From the rude touch of hated foes:
Nor see thy struggling vot'ries led
Where Venus decks the bed!
Nor, Queen of Love, shall our mellifluous lays
Be silent in thy praise:
For thou, next Heav'n's imperial queen,
In highest grace with Jove art seen,
And mighty deeds declare thy pow'r:
The passions hear thy soft control;
Thy sweet voice melts the willing soul,
Enchanted with thy honied lore.

Round thee, where'er thou lead'st the way,
Joyful the frolic Cupids rove;
And as their antic sports they play,
Whisper the harmony of love.
But what have I with love or joy?
My peace wild fears annoy,
The miseries of flight, pursuit's alarms,
And slaughter-threat'ning arms:
Why else the quick, the fav'ring gales
Waft o'er the waves their flying sails?

* As Ægypt was indebted for its fruitfulness to the overflowing of the Nile, the first rising of its waters was marked with religious care, and welcomed with solemn hymns.

SEMICH. This is the fix'd decree of fate *;
And thus high Heav'n's unbounded Lord,
Pronounc'd th' irrevocable word,
And doom'd us to the nuptial state.

CHOR. Ah, never may his sovereign will
Me to Ægyptus' sons unite!

SEMICH. This is to grasp at shadows still,
And sooth thy soul with vain delight.

CHOR. Know'st thou his will? Or has thine eye
Look'd thro' futurity?

SEMICH. His mind I dare not scan, immense, profound:
And thou thy wishes bound;
'Gainst Heav'n's high will exclaim no more,
But in mute meekness learn t' adore.

CHOR. Almighty Sire, whose healing hand
Sooth'd thy lov'd Iö's soul to rest,
With comfort cheer this sorrowing breast,
And save us from this hostile band!
For me thro' fortune's cloud hope beams her ray,
And from that bright'ning part goes bright'ning on;
So right succeeding right shall force its way,
And the good Gods complete what Greece begun.

* This is an allusion, dark as it ought to be, to the future fortune of these persecuted ladies: their story is well known. The epistle of Hypermnestra to Lynceus by Ovid is a fine supplement to this tragedy.

THE

SEVEN CHIEFS

AGAINST

THEBES.

THE

SEVEN CHIEFS

AGAINST

THEBES.

BESIDES this Siege of Thebes Æschylus wrote three Tragedies on the subjects of Laius, Œdipus, and the Sphinx, which are lost. Woe to the ravenous jaws of time, that have devoured these precious morsels of antiquity; we should otherwise have had from this great master a regular, and, no doubt, an interesting account of this illustrious and unfortunate family. It is said that Æschylus particularly valued himself upon this tragedy: not without reason; for it has all that bold painting, with which we might expect his martial genius would embellish such a subject. Always magnificent, he has fixed the scene in Thebes before the principal temple: the clash of arms, the neighing of the horses, and the shouts of the soldiers are heard: Eteocles appears surrounded with the citizens, whom he animates to defend the walls: in the mean time the Chorus, which is composed of

Theban Ladies, distracted with their fears are hanging on the statues of the Gods that adorn the area before the temple. Longinus has remarked on the sublimity of the dialogue; it is worthy an experienced veteran and a brave young king arming in defence of his crown, his life, and his honour; it is worthy of Æschylus. The characters of the Seven Chiefs, that command in the attack, are exquisitely marked and varied; and their impetuous ferocity is admirably contrasted with the calm and deliberate courage of those appointed to oppose them. The shields of six of these chiefs are charged with armorial* bearings expressive of their characters, and as regular as if they had been marshalled by an herald at arms: the impresses are devised with a fine imagination and wonderful propriety.

The judicious choice of the persons of the Chorus forms one of the principal graces of this tragedy, as it gave the poet an opportunity of mixing the

* The origin of these insignia is not known, but we have here a proof of their high antiquity; they were borne as marks of noble descent, or illustrious action, and as such were of distinguishing honour: but should they, in the ambitious meanness of future times (this age is too pure to admit of such a prostitution), be *assumed* by such as are neither distinguished by high birth nor virtuous action, by such as owe their wealth to the wantonness of fortune, or to deeds that deserve a different kind of elevation, they must necessarily suffer great *abatements of honour*, and the proud *achievements* of virtue sink into *common charges*.

natural timidity of the female character with the animated and fiery daring of heroes, the fears of these daughters of Cadmus presenting nothing to their imagination but the scenes of distress and horror, which the insolence of conquest spreads through a vanquished and plundered city, and this painted in the warmest colours, in the strongest style of Æschylus.

Besides the intrinsic beauty of this tragedy, which is very striking, it has to us this further merit, that it gave birth to three of the finest poems of antiquity the Antigone of Sophocles, the Phœnissæ of Euripides, and the Thebaid of Statius.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

ETEOCLES

SOLDIER

ANTIGONE

ISMENE

HERALD

CHORUS of THEBAN VIRGINS.

THE

SEVEN CHIEFS

AGAINST

THEBES.

ETEOCLES, CHORUS.

ETEO. YE citizens of Cadmus *, it behoves
The man, that guides the helm of state †, to speak

* There are so many allusions in this tragedy to the history of Cadmus, that it may not be improper to lay it before the reader in one view. When Jupiter, in the form of a bull, had carried off Europa, the daughter of Agenor king of Phœnicia, the disconsolate father sent his son Cadmus in search of her, commanding him not to return unless he found her. Cadmus having wandered over the world in vain, consulted the Oracle of Apollo at Delphos; the answer of the God was,

Behold amidst the fields a lonely cow,
Unworn with yokes, unbroken to the plough;
Mark well the place where first she lays her down,
There measure out thy walls, and build thy town. ADDISON.

He obeyed. Some of his attendants were sent to a river nigh the place, to bring living water for a sacrifice which he was preparing to Jupiter; an immense dragon rushed from his cave and killed them: Cadmus, to revenge the death of his friends, fought with this dragon and slew him; then, by the admonition of Minerva, he sowed the teeth of the dragon in the ground, from which an host of men completely armed suddenly arose; these furiously attacked each other, till only five of the number remained alive: peace was made between them, and Cadmus associated them to his train. The Thebans

What the sad times require; nor suffer sleep
To weigh his eyelids down. For if success
Attends our toils, to the good Gods we bow *,
The authors of the blessing: Shou'd misfortune,
Avert it Heav'n! befal, Eteocles
Shall hear his name alone wide thro' the city
Insulted by each tongue, that vents its spleen
In mutinous reproach, or loud laments:
From which may Jove, the guardian of our state,
Defend the sons of Cadmus! But this hour
Call on you all, whether your flow'ry spring
Yet wants the prime of manhood, or your age
Puts forth its firmest strength, t' exert your pow'rs,
Well it becomes you, to defend the city,
The altars of the Gods presiding here,
(Ah, never may their honours be effac'd!)
Your children, and this land, your common parent,
And dearest nurse, who on her fost'ring soil

afterwards were proud of deriving some of their best families from this dragon race. Cadmus now built Thebes, and having established his colony, married Harmonia, the daughter of Mars and Venus; all the Gods attended at the nuptials, and each honoured the bride with some present.

† The man that guides the helm of state, ἐν πρύμνῃ πόλεως οἴακα νωμῶν. This beautiful metaphor I believe will be found one of those select few, which are universal in all the polished languages of civilized nations; our author uses it again v. 62 and v. 658. of this play; and his contemporary, Pindar, in his first Pythian Ode, v. 159. and indeed almost every author in prose or poetry since that period: Horace even addresses the republic itself under the character of a ship; and Cicero, in his oration pro domo suâ, says, In illis tenebris reipublicæ cæcisque nubibus et procellis, quum senatum a gubernaculis dejecisses, populum e navi exturbasses, ipse archipirata cum grege prædonum impurissimo plenissimis velis navigares.—R. P. JODRELL.

* The piety of the ancients in ascribing their success to the Gods was conspicuous and uniform: hence the χαριστήρια of the Greeks, and the grates of the Latins were presents to their gods to testify their gratitude for the divine assistance.—STANLEY.

Upheld with bounteous care your infant steps,
And train'd you to this service, that your hands
In her defence might lift the faithful shield.
E'en to this day indeed the Gods incline
To favour us; and tho' so long immur'd
Within our rampires, each bold work of war
Hath prosper'd in our hands. But now the seer,
That listens to the flight of birds *, and thence
Forms in his prescient mind the sure presage,
Guiltless of fire, from their oracular wings
Draws his deep skill, and warns us that the pow'rs
Of Greece, combin'd against us, in the night
Advancing, meditate the dark assault.
Haste all then to the walls, haste to the bulwarks
With all your arms, fill ev'ry tow'r, secure
Each pass, stand firm at ev'ry gate, be bold,
Nor fear th' assailing numbers: Heav'n is with us.
Meanwhile on ev'ry quarter have I sent
T' observe their forces, and descry their march:
By these, not charg'd, I trust, in vain to watch,
Inform'd I guard against the wiles of war.

SOLDIER, ETEOCLES, CHORUS.

SOLD. Illustrious king of Thebes, I bring thee tidings
Of firm assurance from the foe; these eyes
Beheld each circumstance. Seven valiant chiefs
Slew on the black-orb'd shield the victim bull †,

* Apollodorus tells us that Minerva had given Tiresias, as a compensation for his loss of sight, which she could not restore, the faculty of understanding the voices of all birds: hence his prophecies were taken from auguries only; so that the inspection of the entrails placed on the altar, the mounting of the smoke and the flame, and all the omens to which fire was necessary, were out of his department.

Longinus has selected this passage as an instance of the bold and heroic genius of Æschylus. The sublimity here arises from the assemblage of the

And dipping in the gore their furious hands,
In solemn oath attest the God of war,
Bellona, and the carnage-loving pow'r
Of terror* sworn from their firm base to rend
These walls, and lay their ramparts in the dust;

images; the bull slain on the black-orbed shield, shows it to be a sacrifice to Pluto, and a solemn devotion of themselves; the dipping of their hands in the blood, the invocation of Mars, Bellona, and Terror, their shedding tears but without any sign of remorse, and their souls of iron glowing with valour, with the simile of the lion glaring determined battle, are greatly conceived, and together breathe a solemn and terrible magnificence.

Mr. Jodrell observes, that the beauty of this passage has not secured it from the satirical lash of Aristophanes, whose Lysistrata, tendering the oath to her female confederates, proposes to imitate Æschylus by slaying a sheep over a shield, v. 189.

* Terror had before been personified by Homer as the son of Mars,

Οἷος δὲ βροτολοιγὸς Ἄρης πόλεμόνδε μέτεισι,
Τῷ δὲ Φόβος, φίλος υἱὸς, ἅμα κρατερὸς καὶ ἀταρβὴς,
Ἔσπετο, ὅς τ' ἐφόβησε καὶ ἀλάφρονά περ πολεμιστήν.

Il. xiii. v. 298.

Terror, his best lov'd son, attends his course,
Arm'd with stern boldness, and enormous force;
The pride of haughty warriors to confound,
And lay the strength of tyrants on the ground.—Pope.

Virgil has imitated this passage, as far as the imperfection of the Latin language would permit,

——circumque atræ formidinis ora,
Iræque, insidiæque, dei comitatus aguntur.

Æn. xii. v. 336.

Wrath, terror, treason, tumult, and despair,
Dire faces and deform'd, surround the car,
Friends of the god, and followers of the war.—

Dryden.

I mean that the beauty of the prosopopœia, or personification, is here considerably diminished by Formido, Iræ, and Insidiæ, being of the feminine gender, instead of masculine, as Φόβος, or as terror may be made in English.—R. P. Jodrell.

Or, dying, with their warm blood steep this earth.
Each in Adrastus' car some dear remembrance*
Piled to their distant parents, whilst their eyes
Dropp'd tears, but on their face was no remorse.
Each soul of iron glowing with the rage
Of valour, as the lion when he glares
Determin'd battle. What I now relate
Sleeps not, nor lingers: round the urn I left them,
By lot deciding to what gate each chief
Shall lead his forces. These against select
The best, the bravest of the sons of Thebes,
And instant at the gates assign their stations.
For all in arms the Argive host comes on
Involv'd in dust, and from the snorting steeds
The thick foam falls, and dews the whiten'd fields.
Be thine the provident pilot's gen'rous care,
Guard well the town, e'er yet the storm assails it;
E'en now the waves of war roar o'er the plain†:
Seize then this fair occasion, instant seize it.
My faithful eye this day shall hold the watch,
That well inform'd, no danger may surprise thee.

ETEO. O Jove, O Earth, O all ye guardian Gods;
And thou dread curse, the fury of my father,
Of fatal pow'r, O rend not from its roots
This ruin'd city by th' insulting foe

* It was the custom of the ancients before a battle, in which they apprehended danger, to send home to their friends some pledges as remembrances, things of little value in themselves, but rendered dear by the circumstance: these are placed in the chariot of Adrastus, because Amphiaraus had declared, that he alone of the confederate chiefs should return to Argos.

† Æschylus is distinguished for bold and glowing metaphors: Nothing can be more picturesque, animated, or more philosophically exact than the present expression, which calls an army approaching, a land-wave advancing with a roaring noise: the same metaphor occurs afterwards, v. 116. of this play.—R. P. Jodrell.

Trampled in dust, her sweet Helladian tongue
Silent, and all her sacred fires extinct!
Ah, never let this land, this town of Cadmus
Bend her free neck beneath the servile yoke!
Protect her, save her; as you share her honours
I plead: a flourishing state reveres the Gods.

CHOR. Woe, woe, intolerable woe!
Fierce from their camps the hosts advance,
Before their march with thund'ring tread
Proud o'er the plain their fiery coursers prance,
And hither bend their footsteps dread:
Yon cloud of dust that choaks the air,
A true tho' tongueless messenger,
Marks plain the progress of the foe.
And now the horrid clash of arms,
That, like the torrent, whose impetuous tide
Roars down the mountain's craggy side,
Shook the wide fields with fierce alarms,
With nearer terrors strikes our souls,
And thro' our chaste recesses rolls:
Hear, all ye pow'rs of Heav'n, propitious hear,
And check the furies of this threat'ning war!

The crouded walls around
Loud clamours rend the sky;
Whilst rang'd in deep array th' embattled pow'rs
Their silver shields * lift high,
And, level with the ground
To lay their rampir'd heads, assail our tow'rs.

* Stanley rightly observes, that the common soldiers bore white or plain shields, but the generals had devices on theirs. Therefore Euripides (Phœniss. v. 116.) calls the Argive army λευκάσπιν: and Virgil, speaking of Helenor, who was born of a slave, and consequently ignoble, says, parmâ inglorius albâ. Æn. ix.

What guardian God shall I implore?
Bending at what sacred shrine
Call from their happy seats what pow'rs divine,
And suppliant ev'ry sculptur'd form adore?
The time demands it: why then, why delay?—
The sound of arms swells on my affrighted ear.—
Hold now the pall, the garland *, as you pray.—
Hark! 'tis the rude clash of no single spear.
Stern God of war,
Dost thou prepare
Thy sacred city to betray?
Look down, look down †;
O save thine own;
Nor leave us to the foe a prey:
If e'er thy soul had pleasure in the brave,
God of the golden helm, hear us, and save!

Slight were his arms, a sword and silver shield,
No marks of honour charg'd its empty field.—DRYDEN.

R. P. JODRELL.

* In great distresses it was customary for the noblest dames to go in procession to the temples, carrying in their hands rich robes and crowns, with which they adorned the images of the tutelary gods, whose protection they implored: thus Virgil describes the Trojan dames,

Interea ad templum non æquæ Palladis ibant
Crinibus Iliades passis, peplumque ferebant
Suppliciter tristes.—— Æn. i. v. 483.

Mean time the Trojan dames, oppress'd with woe,
To Pallas fane in long procession go:—
They weep, they beat their breasts, they rend their hair,
And rich embroider'd vests for presents bear.—DRYDEN.

This is taken from the sixth Iliad, where the augur Helenus assigns this office to his mother Hecuba.

† Ἐπιδ', ἐπιδε.—The frequent repetitions of the same word in this Chorus are extremely natural, and the language of fear in women trembling at the approach of the enemy.—R. P. JODRELL.

And all ye pow'rs, whose guardian care *
Protects these walls, this favour'd land,
O hear these pious, suppliant strains;
Propitious aid us, aid a virgin band,
And save us from the victor's chains!
For all around with crested pride
High waves the helm's terrific tide,
Tost by the furious breath of war.
And thou, great Jove, almighty sire,
Confound with foul defeat these Argive pow'rs,
Whose arms insult our leaguer'd tow'rs,
And fright our souls with hostile fire.
The reins that curb their proud steeds 'round,
Rattle, and death is in the sound:
'Gainst our sev'n gates seven chiefs of high command,

In arms spear-proof, take their appointed stand.
Daughter of Jove, whose soul
Glows at th' embattled plain:
And thou, by whom the pawing steed arose †,

* The Gods here addressed, Θεοὶ πολισσοῦχοι χθονὸς, were those before whose images the Chorus now stood. Mars and Venus are invoked with peculiar propriety, as the parents of Harmonia, and so the great progenitors of the Cadmeian line.

† Neptune acquired the title of ἵππιος from being the creator of the horse, according to the fabulous mythology, and is thus invoked by Virgil in the opening of his Georgicks,

Tuque O cui prima frementem
Fudit equum magno tellus percussa tridente
Neptune.

And thou, whose trident, struck the teeming earth,
And made a passage for the courser's birth.—Dryden.

The story was, that he and Minerva both claimed the honour of giving their name to Athens: Jupiter decreed, that whoever produced the most useful present to mankind should have the preference. Neptune struck the earth

Great monarch of the main
Curb'd by thy strong control;
From our fears free us, free us from our foes!
On thee, stern Mars, again I call:
Haste thee, God, and with thee bring
The Queen of Love, from whose high race we spring;
If Cadmus e'er was dear, defend his wall!
Thou terror of the savage Phœbus, hear,
In all thy terrors rush upon the foe!
Chaste Virgin-huntress, Goddess ever dear,
Wing the keen arrow from thy ready bow!
Hark! fraught with war
The groaning car,
Imperial Juno! shakes the ground;
Fierce as they pass,
The wheels of brass,
Dear Virgin-huntress! roar around:
The gleaming lustre of the brandish'd spear
Glares terribly across the troubled air *.
Alas my country! must these eyes,
Must these sad eyes behold thy fall?
Ah, what a storm of stones, that flies,
And wing'd with ruin smites the wall!
O Phœbus! at each crouded gate
Begins the dreadful work of fate;
Each arm the thund'ring falchion wields,
And clashes on the sounding shields.
O thou, whose kind and matchless might,
Blest Onca, thro' the glowing fight

with his trident, and gave existence to this animal; Minerva with her spear raised the olive tree, and conquered.— R. P. Jodrell.

* The fire of expression in Æschylus is often incapable of a literal translation. Here the whole atmosphere convulsed with the agitation of spears is said to be inflamed to madness. R. P. Jodrell.

Obedient conquest joys t' attend,
All our sev'n gates, dread queen, defend!
And all ye mighty, guardian pow'rs,
That here preside, protect our tow'rs:
Nor the war-wasted town betray,
To fierce and dissonant foes a prey!
Ye Gods, deliverers of this land,
To whom we stretch the suppliant hand,
Hear us, O hear our virgin pray'r,
And show that Thebes is yet your care!
By ev'ry solemn temple, ev'ry shrine,
Each hallow'd orgie, and each rite divine,
Each honour to your pow'r in rev'rence paid,
Hear us, ye guardian Gods, hear us, and aid!

ETEOCLES, CHORUS.

ETEO. It is not to be borne, ye wayward race*:
Is this your best, is this the aid you lend
The state, the fortitude with which you steel
The souls of the besieg'd, thus falling down
Before these images to wail, and shriek
With lamentations loud? Wisdom abhors you.
Nor in misfortune, nor in dear success,
Be woman my associate: if her pow'r
Bears sway, her insolence exceeds all bounds;

* Eteocles, with reason, offended at the intimidating cries of these females, treats them with great harshness; his reflections are so uncourtly, that they might well say afterwards, "thou scornest our sex:" but certainly they were out of their province: even the fond and gentle Hector says to the amiable Andromache,

No more:—but hasten to thy tasks at home,
There guide the spindle, and direct the loom;
Me glory summons to the martial scene,
The field of combat is the sphere for men.

POPE. Il. vi.

But if she fears, woe to that house and city.
And now, by holding counsel with weak fear,
You magnify the foe, and turn our men
To flight: thus are we ruin'd by ourselves.
This ever will arise from suffering women
To intermix with men. But mark me well,
Whoe'er henceforth dares disobey my orders,
Be it or man or woman, old or young,
Vengeance shall burst upon him, the decree
Stands irreversible, and he shall die.
War is no female province, but the scene
For men: hence, home; nor spread your mischiefs here.
Hear you, or not? Or speak I to the deaf?

CHOR. Dear to thy country, son of Œdipus,
My soul was seiz'd with terror, when I heard
The rapid car roll on, its whirling wheels
Grating harsh thunder; and the iron curb
Incessant clashing on the barbed steed.

ETEO. What! shou'd the pilot, when the lab'ring bark *
Scarce rides the swelling surge, forsake the helm,
And seek his safety from the sculptur'd prow?

CHOR. Yet therefore to these ancient images,
Confiding in their sacred pow'r, I ran,
When at the gates sharp sleet of arrowy show'r
Drove hard; my fears impell'd me to implore
The blest Gods to protect the city's strength †.

* Stanley has with much learning and judgment proved, against Heinsius, Scaliger, Grotius, and Bochart, that the images of the tutelary gods were anciently affixed to the prows of ships. The allusion is finely conceived, and expressed with great strength and proper conciseness.

† The scholiast tells us, that the Trojans, when their city was stormed, saw the gods carrying away their images; this he takes from a tragedy of Sophocles on that subject, which is lost. There is a similar instance in the Troades of Euripides; hence Virgil,

ETEO. Pray that our tow'rs repel the hostile spear.
CHOR. This shall the Gods——
ETEO. The Gods, they say prepare
To quit their seats, and leave a vanquish'd town.
CHOR. Ah, never, whilst I breathe the vital air,
May their blest train forsake us; nor these eyes
Behold destruction raging thro' our streets,
And in fierce flames our stately structures blaze!
ETEO. Let not these invocations of the Gods
Make you improvident; remember rather
Obedience is the mother of success,

Excessere omnes adytis arisque relictis
Dii, quibus imperium hoc steterat.— Æn. ii.

You see our hopeless state; how every god,
Who guarded Troy, has left his old abode.—PITT.

The Romans were so strongly impressed with this idea, that when they besieged a town they anxiously inquired the name of the tutelary god, whom they evoked with much solemnity. The reason assigned for this desertion was, that amidst such scenes of devastation and carnage the reverence and honours due to the gods must be neglected; this shows the propriety of Eteocles' address before,

Protect her, save her, as you share her honours
I plead: a flourishing state reveres the Gods.

The learned Mr. Jodrell observes here, that Jerusalem, when sacked, was said to have been forsaken of its Gods; and that the Shekinah, or divine presence, was undoubtedly withdrawn from the ark of the first temple, before it was destroyed by the king of Babylon. He adds, that Tarquin, before he dedicated the temple to Jupiter Capitolinus, performed the ceremony of unhallowing the ground from all other religious institutions, ut area esset tota Jovis. Liv. l. i. c. 55. He further says, that this idea and veneration of local divinity was by some people carried to such an excess of extravagant folly, that they used to bind their favourite gods in their temples to prevent such desertion; which custom some Christian writers, whose God is not to be confined with mortal fetters, object with great indignation against the Gentiles. He refers us to Arnob. cont. Gent. l. vi.—to Cyprian. ad Demetr. p. 191. Ed. Fell.—Petr. c. 89. p. 435. Ed. Burm. and to Diodor. Sic. l. xvii.—Q. Curtius, l. iv. c. 3.

Wedded to safety: so the wise assure us.

CHOR. Yet in the Gods is a superior pow'r,
Which often in afflictions clears away
Th' impenetrable cloud, whose sullen gloom
Sharp misery hung before our darken'd eyes.

ETEO. The victim, and the hallow'd sacrifice,
When the foes menace, are the task of men;
Thine, to be silent, and remain at home *.

CHOR. That we possess our city yet unconquer'd,
That yet our tow'rs repel th' assailing foe,
Is from the Gods: from them our voice calls down
Further success: Why shou'd this move thy anger?

ETEO. It does not, virgin: No: your pious vows
I blame not. But be silent; lest thy fears,
Swelling to this excess, dismay our youth.

CHOR. Affrighted at the sudden din of war,
And trembling with my fears, with hasty foot
I sought this citadel, this sacred seat.

ETEO. If haply now your eyes behold the dead,
Or wounded; burst not forth in loud laments:
For blood and carnage is the food of war.

CHOR. Distinct I hear the fiery-neighing steed.

ETEO. Whate'er thou hear'st, it asks not thy attention.

CHOR. The city shakes beneath th' enclosing foes.

ETEO. Be satisfied; to guard it is my charge.

* Thus Sophocles, Γύναι, γυναιξὶ κόσμον ἡ σιγὴ φέρει. Ajax. v. 293. This line is quoted to introduce an anecdote, which deserves to be mentioned. When a learned German paid a visit to the accomplished and modest M. Dacier, he requested her to inscribe her name and a sentence in his travelling book, or album, according to the arrogant custom of his country, among the names of the most eminent scholars in Europe: she at first refused, but was at last prevailed upon, and wrote this celebrated verse of Sophocles, which Dr. Franklin well translates thus,

Woman, thy sex's noblest ornament
Is silence.— R. P. JODRELL.

CHOR. I fear: the clash is louder at the gates.
ETEO. Peace; nor distract the city with thy cries.
CHOR. Ye social pow'rs, leave not our walls defenceless.
ETEO. Woe on thee! Canst thou not bear this in silence?
CHOR. Gods of this state, save me from slavery!
ETEO. Me wou'dst thou make a slave, and all the state.
CHOR. All-pow'rful Jove, turn on the foe the sword!
ETEO. Heav'ns, of what quality are women form'd?
CHOR. Wretched, as men are, in their country's ruin.
ETEO. Still wail thy country? Still embrace these Gods?
CHOR. Wild with my fears, I speak I know not what.
ETEO. Wou'dst thou indulge me in a light request?
CHOR. Speak it at once, quickly shall I obey.
ETEO. Be silent, wretch; nor terrify thy friends.
CHOR. I will; and with them bear what Fate decrees.
ETEO. I praise thy resolution. Clasp no more
These images; but stand apart, and ask
Happier events; entreat the friendly Gods
To aid us. Hear my vows; then instant raise
The heav'n-appeasing Pæan, whose high strains
Of solemn import, 'midst her sacred rites,
Greece pours symphonious; strains, that raise the soul
To gen'rous courage, and the fix'd disdain
Of fear and danger. To the guardian Gods
Whose tutelary pow'r protects our fields,
Protects our crouded streets; to Dirce's fount;
Nor thee, Ismenus, will I pass unhonour'd;
If conquest crowns our helms, and saves our city,
The hallow'd sacrifice shall bleed, and load
Their smoaking altars; this victorious hand
Shall raise the glitt'ring trophies *, and hang high,

* It was a custom derived from early antiquity to erect trophies to the Gods, of the arms of the conquered, in the place where the victory was obtained; hence their Ζεὺς τρόπαιος and τροπαιοῦχος. The vests stript from

To grace their sacred walls, the rich-wrought vests,
Spoils of the war, rent from the bleeding foe.
Breathe to the Gods these vows: but let no sigh
Break forth, no lamentation rude and vain:
Weak is their pow'r to save thee from thy fate.
My charge shall be at our sev'n gates to fix
Six of our bravest youth, myself the seventh,
In dreadful opposition to the foe;
E'er yet the violent and tumultuous cry
Calls me perforce to join the fiery conflict.

CHORUS.

I. 1.

I wou'd obey thee; but my breast
Yet pants with fear, and knows not rest:
Too near my heart distracting care
Wakes all the horrors of despair:
And as the trembling dove, whose fears
Keep watch in her uneasy bow'r,
Thinks in each rustling leaf she hears
The serpent gliding to devour,
I tremble at each sullen sound
Of clashing arms, that roars around:
With all their troops, with all their pow'rs,
Fierce they advance to storm our tow'rs;
Now hurtling in the darken'd sky,
What does my cruel fate prepare!
Rude, batt'ring stones incessant fly,
And all the missive storm of war.

I. 2.

Guard, ye great Gods, O guard our wall,
Nor let the tow'rs of Cadmus fall!

the slain were hung up in the temples. This distinction could not escape the sagacity of Pauw.

Ah, to what fairer, richer plain
Your radiant presence will you deign,
These fields abandon'd to the foes,
Thro' whose crisp'd shades and smiling meads,
Jocundly warbling as she goes,
Dirce her liquid treasures leads,
And boasts that Tethys never gave,
Nor all her nymphs, a purer wave!
Deign then, ye Gods that guard this land,
Here deign to take your hallow'd stand:
Assert your glory: on the foe
Pour rout, and havoc, and dismay,
Confusion wild, soul-with'ring woe,
And flight that flings his arms away.

I. 3.

Hear then the mournful, solemn strain:
For dreadful were its fate, shou'd this strong wall,
This ancient, rampir'd city, fall,
And spread its light dust o'er th' encumber'd plain,
Beneath the proud Achaian spear,
Dishonour'd sunk, the waste of war.
Shou'd the fresh virgin's bloom, the matron's age,
By the fierce victor's fiery rage,
Their robes all rent, their bleeding bosoms bare,
Be dragg'd by their loose-flowing hair,
Like horses, a reluctant prize;
The desolated streets re-echoing to their cries.

II. 1.

Before my sad presaging soul
What scenes of imag'd horror roll!
I see the tender virgin's woe,
E'er yet her ripen'd beauties glow;

The hateful way I see her tread,
Forcibly torn from her sweet home:
Happier, far happier are the dead;
They rest within the silent tomb.
But, the walls humbled to the ground,
What dreadful mis'ries rage around!
Furious one leads the vengeful bands;
One stains with blood his reeking hands;
Wide roll, outrageous to destroy,
The dusky smoke, and torrent fires;
Whilst slaught'ring Mars with hideous joy
The heav'n-contemning rage inspires.

II. 2.

From house to house, from street to street *,
The crashing flames roar round, and meet;
Each way the fiery deluge preys,
And girds us with the circling blaze.
The brave, that 'midst these dire alarms
For their lost country greatly dare,
And fir'd with vengeance rush to arms,
Fall victims to the blood-stain'd spear †.
The bleeding babe, with innocent cries,
Drops from his mother's breast, and dies.

* The translator makes no apology for adopting the interpretation of Pauw. Periti sciunt.

† This is a most beautiful and picturesque image: among the horrors of a captive city, which are here so finely painted, it was extremely natural for women to describe infants at the breast shrieking with affright; hence Virgil seems to have borrowed a very pathetic idea,

Et trepidæ matres pressere ad pectora natos. Æn. vii. v. 518.

Pale at the piercing call, the mothers prest
With shrieks their starting infants to the breast.—Pitt.

See also Apollonius Rhodius, l. iv. v. 136.—R. P. Jodrelli.

See rapine rushes, bent on prey,
His hasty step brooks no delay.
The spoiler, loaded with his store,
Envious the loaded spoiler views;
Disdains another shou'd have more,
And his insatiate toil renews.

II. 3.

Thick on the earth the rich spoil lies *;
For the rude plunderers' restless-rolling tide,
Their worthless numbers waving wide,
Drop in their wild haste many a glitt'ring prize.
Whilst, in her chaste apartment bred,
The trembling virgin captive led,
Pours, in the anguish of her soul, the tear:
And, torn from all her heart holds dear,
The youthful bride, a novice yet in woe,
Obeys the haughty, happy foe.
But e'er such horrors blast my sight,
May these sad eyes close in eternal night †!

SEMICH. See, from his watch the veteran returns,
Bearing, I ween, fresh tidings from yon host,
Of highest import: quick his foot, and hasty.

SEMICH. This way, behold, the son of Œdipus,
The king himself advances, pressing on
His hurried step to learn their new-form'd measures.

ETEOCLES, SOLDIER, CHORUS,

SOLD. Now I can tell thee, for I know it well,

* This passage in the original has an obscurity on which the annotators have not vouchsafed to cast one gleam of light: Mr. Heath's interpretation of καρπὸς is beneath the dignity of the occasion. The translator can hardly flatter himself that he has hit on the precise idea of his author, but he has not wilfully deviated from the original.

† We are indebted to Pauw for this elucidation.

The disposition of the foe, and how
Each at our gates takes his allotted post.
Already near the Prætian gate in arms
Stands Tydeus raging; for the prophet's voice
Forbids his foot to pass Ismenus' stream,
The victims not propitious: at the pass
Furious, and eager for the fight, the chief,
Fierce as the dragon when the mid-day sun *

* The whole description of Tydeus is in the boldest style and strongest colouring of Æschylus. The serpent lying in a torpid state during the winter, is supposed to have his rage increased by heat; hence this glowing description of him by Virgil,

Postquam exhausta palus, terræque ardore dehiscunt,
Exilit in siccum, et flammantia lumina torquens
Sævit agris, asperque siti, atque exterritus æstu.

Georg. iii. v. 432.

But when in muddy pools the water sinks,
And the chopt earth is furrow'd o'er with chinks;
He leaves the fens, and leaps upon the ground,
And hissing rowls his glaring eyes around:
With thirst inflamed, impatient of the heats,
He rages in the fields, and wide destruction threats. DRYDEN.

Ovid has with peculiar judgment seized this idea, and carried it to the north pole.

Quæque polo posita est glaciali proxima serpens,
Frigore pigra prius, neque formidabilis ulli,
Incaluit, sumpsitque novas fervoribus iras.

Met. l. ii. v. 173.

The folded serpent next the frozen pole,
Stiff and benumb'd before, began to roll,
And raged with inward heat, and threaten'd war,
And shot a redder light from every star.—ADDISON.

Statius could not omit this circumstance, though his immense dragon was a very quiet animal;

Sævior anfractu laterum sinuosa retorquens
Terga solo, siccique nocens furit igne veneni.

Theb. l. v.

Calls forth his glowing terrors, raves aloud,
Reviles the sage, as forming tim'rous league
With war and fate. Frowning he speaks, and shakes
The dark crest streaming o'er his shaded helm
In triple wave; whilst dreadful ring around
The brazen bosses of his shield, impress'd
With this proud argument. A sable sky
Burning with stars; and in the midst full-orb'd
A silver moon, the eye of night, o'er all
Awful in beauty pours her peerless light.
Clad in these proud habiliments, he stands
Close to the river's margin, and with shouts
Demands the war, like an impatient steed,
That pants upon the foaming curb, and waits
With fiery expectation the known signal,
Swift as the trumpet's sound to burst away.
Before the Prætian gate, its bars remov'd,
What equal chief wilt thou appoint against him?

ETEO. This military pride, it moves not me:
The gorgeous blazonry of arms, the crest
High waving o'er the helm, the roaring boss,
Harmless without the spear, imprint no wound.
The sable night, spangled with golden stars,
On his proud shield impress'd, perchance may prove
A gloomy presage. Shou'd the shades of night
Fall on his dying eyes, the boastful charge
May to the bearer be deem'd ominous,
And he the prophet of his own destruction.
Against his rage the son of Astacus,
That breathes deliberate valour, at that gate
Will I appoint commander; bent on deeds
Of glory, but a votary at the shrine
Of modesty, he scorns the arrogant vaunt
As base, but bids brave actions speak his worth.

The flow'r of that bold stem, which from the ground *
Rose arm'd, and fell not in the deathful fight,
Is Menalippus; him his parent earth
Claims as her own, and in her natural right
Calls him to guard her from the hostile spear:
But the brave deed the die of war decides.

CHOR. Go then, my guardian hero, go;
And may each fav'ring God with bright success
Thy gen'rous valour bless:
For at thy country's dear command
Thou arm'st thy righteous hand,
To pour her vengeance on the foe.
Yet my sad heart must sigh,
When on the blood-empurpled ground,
Gored with many a gaping wound,
I see my dearest friends expiring lie.

SOLD. May the Gods crown his valiant toil with conquest.
But Capaneus against th' Electran gates
Takes his allotted post, and tow'ring stands
Vast as the earth-born giants, and inflam'd
To more than mortal daring: horribly
He menaces the walls; may Heav'n avert
His impious rage! vaunts that, the Gods assenting
Or not assenting, his strong hand shall rend
Their rampires down; that e'en the rage of Jove
Descending on the field shou'd not restrain him.
His lightnings, and his thunders wing'd with fire
He likens to the sun's meridian heat.
On his proud shield pourtray'd, A naked man
Waves in his hand a blazing torch †; beneath

* As Menalippus here and Megareus were of the dragon-race, that sprung armed from the earth, there is a peculiar propriety in calling them forth to defend that earth, and repay that nouriture she gave them.

† Stanley allows that this insigne may be supposed to allude to an ancient

In golden letters, I WILL FIRE THE CITY.
Against this man—But who shall dare t' engage
His might, and dauntless his proud rage sustain?

ETEO. Advantage from advantage here arises.
The arrogant vaunts, which man's vain tongue throws out,
Shall on himself recoil. This haughty chief
Threats high, and prompt to execute his threats
Spurns at the Gods, opes his unhallow'd lips
In shallow exultations, hurls on high,
Weak mortal as he is, 'gainst Jove himself
Hurls his extravagant and wild defiance.
On him, I trust, the thunder wing'd with fire †,
Far other than the sun's meridian heat,
Shall roll its vengeance. But against his pride,
Insolent vaunter, shall the glowing spirit,
That burns for glory in the daring breast
Of Polyphontes, be oppos'd; his arm,
Strong in Diana's tutelary aid,

custom in use before the invention of trumpets, where the torch-bearer, sacred to Mars, by stepping into the middle space between the two armies, used to brandish it as a signal for the onset. The man being naked marks the contempt with which Capaneus treated the enemy, and implies that he needed no arms to attack and fire the city.—R. P. JODRELL.

These observations are in the genuine spirit of criticism, and show great penetration and judgment: Euripides could give this torch-bearer the name of Prometheus only as a metonymy; and from this custom arose that bold metaphor which we shall find in the Persians, Σάλπιγξ αὐτῇ ἐπέφλεγεν, and the Martemque accendere cantu of Virgil.

† There is a noble spirit of religious confidence in this assertion; it deserves to be mentioned, that this impious boaster perished by that lightning which he thus defied.—R. P. JODRELL.

The learned reader will find a bold and spirited narrative of the daring actions of this hero, and his death, at the end of the tenth book of the Thebaid of Statius, a writer whose fiery genius sometimes overleaped judgment, but who compensates for this with

Thoughts that breathe, and words that burn.

Shall be a sure defence. But to thy tale;
Who next before our gates assumes his station?

CHOR. Yes, let him perish, the proud foe,
That storms, in savage hope, the vanquish'd town,
And rends its rampires down.
Him first may Heav'n's almighty sire,
Rolling his vengeful fire,
Dash in the flaming ruin low;
E'er his impetuous spear
Bursts ev'ry bar of my retreat,
And from my virgin seat
Drags me perforce from all my soul holds dear.

SOLD. Third from the brazen helm leap'd forth the lot
Of fierce Eteoclus, who takes his post
Against the gates of Neis: there he whirls
His fiery-neighing steeds, that toss their heads
Proud of their nodding plumes, eager to rush
Against the gates, and snorting champ their curbs
Boss'd with barbaric pride. No mean device
Is sculptur'd on his shield, A man in arms,
His ladder fix'd against the enemies' walls,
Mounts, resolute to rend their rampires down;
And cries aloud, the letters plainly mark'd,
NOT MARS HIMSELF SHALL BEAT ME FROM THE TOW'RS.
Appoint of equal hardihood some chief
To guard the city from the servile yoke.

ETEO. Such shall I send, to conquest send him; one
That bears not in his hand this pageantry
Of martial pride. The hardy Megareus,
From Creon sprung, and that bold race, which rose
Embattled from the earth: him from the gates
The furious neighings of the fiery steeds
Affright not; but his blood spilt on the earth

Amply requites the nouriture she gave him,
Or captive both, the man in arms, the town
Storm'd on the sculptur'd shield, and the proud bearer,
Shall with their spoils adorn his father's house.

CHOR. Go then, and glory be thy guide!
For thee, brave youth, we pour this ardent pray'r,
And fav'ring Heav'n shall hear.
Go then, my house's guardian, go,
And rushing on the foe,
Bravely repel their vaunting pride.
And as each furious soul
Hurls the ferocious menace high,
May he, that rules the sky,
In vengeance his indignant eye-balls roll!

SOLD. At the next gate, nam'd from the martial Goddess
Onca Minerva, stands Hippomedon *.
I heard his thund'ring voice, I saw his form
In bulk and stature proudly eminent;
I saw him roll his shield, large, massy, round,
Of broad circumference: it struck my soul
With terror. On its orb no vulgar artist
Express'd this image, A Typhæus huge,
Disgorging from his foul enfoulder'd jaws,
In fierce effusion, wreaths of dusky smoke,
Signal of kindling flames: its bending verge

* Of the other gates we find no satisfactory account to lay before the reader: but the scholiast here observes, that Onca was one of the titles of Minerva at Thebes, which Cadmus introduced from Phœnicia, where she was so called. The scholiast on the second Olympic ode of Pindar asserts, that Cadmus erected at Ὄγκαι, a village in Bœotia, a statue of Pallas, who was therefore worshipped under the title of Ὀγκαία; see also the scholiast on Lycophron, v. 1225. She had two temples at Thebes, from which she had two titles, Oncæa and Ismenia; the latter certainly derived from the river Ismenus. See Œdip. Tyr. Sophoclis, v. 20. on which the scholiast gives Οἰκαία by mistake for Ὀγκαία.—R. P. JODRELL.

With folds of twisted serpents border'd round.
With shouts the giant-chief provokes the war;
And in the ravings of outrageous valour
Glares terror from his eyes. Behoves thee then
Strong opposition to his fiery rage,
Which at the gates e'en now spreads wild dismay.

ETEO. First, Onca Pallas, holding near the gates *
Her hallow'd state, abhors his furious rage;
And in her guardian care shall crush the pride
Of this fell dragon. Then the son of Æneps,
Hyperbius, of approv'd and steady valour,
Shall man to man oppose him; one that dares
Assay his fate in the rough shock of battle;
In form, in spirit, and in martial arms
Consummate; such high grace Hermes conferr'd.
In hostile arms thus man shall combat man,
And to the battle on their sculptur'd shields
Bring adverse Gods; the fierce Typhæus he,
Breathing forth flakes of fire; Hyperbius bears
The majesty of Jove securely thron'd,
Grasping his flaming bolt: and who e'er saw
The Thund'rer vanquish'd? In the fellowship
Of friendly Gods, the conquerors are with us,
They with the conquer'd; and with like event
These warriors shall engage; as Jove in fight
Subdued the fell Typhæus, so his form
Emblazon'd on the shield shall guard Hyperbius.

CHOR. If ought of truth my soul inspires,
This chief, that tow'ring o'er th' affrighted field

* The scholiast on v. 170. interprets this to allude to a picture, perhaps a statue of the protecting goddess placed at the entrance of the city, and quotes Lycophron for her name of Πυλαΐτις so acquired.—Alexan. l. 354.—whose scholiast observes, that it has a symbolical meaning, and implied that wisdom should be always at their gates and doors.—R. P. JODRELL.

Bears on his sculptur'd shield
Th' enormous monster, buried deep
Beneath a mountainous heap,
Rolling in vain his turbid fires,
Monster accurs'd, abhorr'd
By Gods above, by men below;
This chief his head shall bow
Low at the gate beneath the victor's sword.

SOLD. Prophetic be thy hopes. At the north gate,
Yet hear me, king, the fifth bold warrior takes
His station, near the tomb where honour'd lies
Jove-born Amphion *: By his spear he swears,
Which, as he grasps, he dares to venerate †
More than a God, and dearer to his eyes
Than the sweet light of Heav'n: by this he swears,
To level with the ground the walls of Thebes,
Tho' Jove himself oppose him. Thus exclaims
This beauteous branch sprung from a mountain nymph ‡,
Blooming in manly youth; the tender down
Of unripe age scarce sprouting on his cheek;
But ruthless are his thoughts, cruel his eye
And proudly vaunting at the gate he takes
His terrible stand. Upon his clashing shield,
Whose orb sustains the storm of war, he bears

* Amphion, the son of Jupiter and Antiopa, having received a lute from Mercury, was so excellent a musician, that according to the fable, he brought the stones together with which the tower of Thebes was built: hence Horace calls him Thebanæ conditor arcis—R. P. JODRELL.

† Statius with more reason assigns this impiety to Capeneus, who is represented as a contemptor divum, like Mezentius: the one says, Virtus mihi numen, et ensis, quem teneo; the other

Dextra mihi deus, et telum, quod missile libro
Adsint.

‡ This mountain nymph was the Arcadian Atalanta.

The foul disgrace of Thebes, a rav'nous sphinx,
Fix'd to the plates; the burnish'd monster round
Pours a portentous gleam; beneath her lies
A Theban, mangled by her cruel fangs.
'Gainst this let each brave arm direct the spear.
No hireling he, to prostitute for gold*
The war, or shame the length of way he trod,
E'en from Arcadia: such this stranger comes
Parthenopœus, and repays to Argos
Its hospitable honours, 'gainst these tow'rs
Breathing proud menaces. The Gods avert them!

ETEO. That ruin, which their fierce aspiring thoughts
With impious vaunts intend, may the just Gods
Turn on themselves, total defeat, and shame;
So let them perish! To this proud Arcadian
No boaster we oppose; but one whose hand
Knows its rough work, Actor, the valiant brother
Of him last named. Never will he permit
The tongue, without th' assay of warlike deeds,
To rush within the gates, and execute
Its ruinous threats; nor him, whose hostile shield
Bears sculptur'd that abhorr'd and rav'ning beast:
And many a thund'ring stroke with stern rebuke
Shall check her proud advances to the walls.
Soon shall the fav'ring Gods confirm these hopes.

CHOR. These words appal my throbbing breast:
And the light tangles of my braided hair
Rise upright with my fear,
As from the impious foes around
These dreadful voices sound,
Furious with thund'ring threats exprest.

* Οὐ κατηλεύσειν μάχην. Ennius expresses the same idea under the same metaphor.

Non cauponantes bellum, sed belligerantes.

Ye pow'rs that rule on high,
Scatter their dreaded forces wide,
Or let their crested pride
Low in the dust beneath our rampires lie!

SOLD. The sixth brave chief, that with the golden curb
Of prudence knows to check this gen'rous valour,
The fate-foretelling seer, Amphiaraus *,
At th' Omolæan gate † his destin'd post
Assumes in arms, and on the fiery Tydeus
Throws many a keen reproach, reviles him as
An homicide, the troubler of the state
The mighty author of all ill to Argos,
With murder and the furies at his heels
Urging Adrastus to these hateful deeds.
Thy brother Polynices, with him leagued
In these despiteful deeds, he blames aloud,
Descants upon his name, and thus rebukes him,

* The modest and amiable augur had foretold the ill success of the war, and the death of all the chiefs, Adrastus only excepted; he would therefore have concealed himself, but was betrayed by his wife Eriphyle, who had passionately desired some female ornament, which Polynices had given to Argia upon the day of their marriage: this was a necklace, or rather a cestus, the work of Vulcan, and by him presented to Harmonia when she wedded Cadmus, and had been fatal to her, to Semele, and to Jocasta. See Statius, l. ii. v. 272, &c.

Sic Eriphyleos aurum fatale penates
Irrupit, scelerumque ingentia semina movit,
Et grave Tysiphone risit gravisa futuris.

As Amphiaraus was fighting bravely, the earth opened beneath him, and he descended alive to the infernal regions with all his arms, and in his chariot. Statius has exerted the utmost force of his genius in describing this righteous hero.

† The Thessalians gave the feasts of Ceres the name of Omolôia, des deux mots, Omou ensemble, and Lôion meilleur, excellent.—Histoire religieuse du Calandrier, par M. Court de Gebelin. The scholiast tells us, that these gates were so called from Omolois, a daughter of Niobe.

How grateful to the Gods must this deed be,
Glorious to hear, and in the roll of fame
Shining to distant ages, thus to lead
These foreign arms to waste thy bleeding country,
To raze those princely mansions, where thy fathers,
Heroes and demigods, once held their seats!
But say thy cause be just, will justice dry
Thy mother's tears? And when the furious spear,
Hurl'd by thy hand, shall pierce thy country's bosom,
Will she with friendly arms again receive thee?
Prescient of fate I shall enrich this soil,
Sunk in the hostile plain. But let us fight.
One thing at least is mine: I will not find
A vulgar, or dishonourable death.
So spoke the prophet; and with awful port
Advanc'd his massy shield, the shining orb
Bearing no impress: for his gen'rous soul
Wishes to be, not to appear, the best;
And from the culture of his modest worth
Bears the rich fruit of great and glorious deeds.
Him let the virtuous and the wise oppose;
For dreadful is the foe that fears the Gods.

ETEO. I mourn the destiny, that blends the just
With these unhallow'd wretches. Nothing worse
In whate'er cause, than impious fellowship;
Nothing of good is reap'd; for when the field
Is sown with wrong, the ripen'd fruit is death.
If with a desperate band, whose hearts are hot
With villany, the pious hoists his sails,
The vengeance of the Gods bursts on the bark
And sinks him with the heav'n-detested crew.
If 'midst a race, inhospitably bent
On savage deeds, regardless of the Gods,
The just man fix his seat, th' impending wrath

Spares not, but strikes him with vindictive fury,
Crush'd in the general ruin. So this seer,
Of temper'd wisdom, of unsullied honour,
Just, good, and pious, and a mighty prophet,
In despite to his better judgment join'd
With men of impious daring, bent to tread
The long, irremeable way, with them
Shall, if high Jove assist us, be dragg'd down
To joint perdition. Ne'er shall he advance
Against our gates, withheld not by base fear,
Or cowardice of soul; but that he knows
His fate, if Phœbus ought of truth foretels,
To fall in fight: he loves then to be silent,
Since what the time demands he cannot speak.
Yet him against the strength of Lasthenes,
Who from the stranger's inroad guards our gates,
Shall I oppose: in manhood's vig'rous prime
He bears the providence of age; his eye
Quick as the lightning's glance; before his shield
Flames his protended spear *, and longs t' obey
His hand. But victory is the gift of Heav'n.

CHOR. That gift, ye great immortal pow'rs,
On the brave guardians of our state bestow;
On each victorious brow
The radiant honour bind! Oh, hear
A virgin's pious pray'r;
Chase the proud strangers from our tow'rs;
Or headlong let them fall,
Thy red right hand, almighty sire,
Rolling its vengeful fire,
In flaming ruin stretch'd beneath our wall!

SOLD. The seventh bold chief—Forgive me that I name

* Amidst the obscurity of this passage, and the uncertainty of the annotators, the translator has selected that idea, which seems most poetical.

Thy brother, and relate the horrible vows,
The imprecations, which his rage pours forth
Against the city; on fire to mount the walls,
And from their turrets to this land proclaim,
Rending its echoes with the song of war,
Captivity: to meet thee sword to sword,
Kill thee, then die upon thee: if thou livest,
T' avenge on thee his exile and disgrace
With the like treatment. Thund'ring vengeance thus,
The rage of Polynices calls the Gods
Presiding o'er his country, to look down,
And aid his vows. His well-orb'd shield he holds,
New-wrought, and with a double impress charg'd:
A warrior, blazing all in golden arms,
A female form of modest aspect leads,
Expressing justice, as th' inscription speaks,
YET ONCE MORE TO HIS COUNTRY, AND ONCE MORE
TO HIS PATERNAL THRONE, I WILL RESTORE HIM.
Such their devices. But th' important task,
Whom to oppose against his force, is thine.
Let not my words offend: I but relate,
Do thou command; for thou art sovereign here.

ETEO. How dreadful is the hatred of the Gods *!
Unhappy sons of Œdipus, your fate
Claims many a tear. Ah me! my father's curse
Now stamps its vengeance deep. But to lament,

* At the mention of each of the other chiefs Eteocles had shown himself unmoved, and given his orders with calmness and prudence; nay, his reflections on Amphiaraus have a solemn air of religion: but no sooner is his brother named, than he loses all temper; he begins indeed as if he would lament the unhappy fate of his family, but soon starts from that idea, and though himself the agressor, reviles his brother as insolent, outrageous, and unjust from his infancy; then in the spirit of a man that has done an injury, who never forgives, works himself up to that ungoverned rage, which destroyed his brother, himself, and all the unhappy family of Œdipus.

Or sigh, or shed the tear, becomes me not,
Lest more intolerable grief arise.
Be Polynices told, ill-omen'd name,
Soon shall we see how far his blazon'd shield
Avails; how far inscriptions wrought in gold,
With all their futile vauntings, will restore him.
If justice, virgin daughter of high Jove,
Had ever form'd his mind, or rul'd his actions,
This might have been: but neither when his eyes
First saw the light of life; nor in the growth
Of infancy; nor in th' advancing years
Of youth; nor in the riper age, that clothes
With gradual down the manly cheek, did justice
E'er deign t' instruct, or mark him for her own.
Nor now, I ween, in this his fell intent
To crush his country will her presence aid him:
For justice were not justice, shou'd she favour
Th' injurious outrage of his daring spirit.
In this confiding I will meet his arms
In armed opposition: Who more fit?
Chief shall engage with chief, with brother brother,
And foe with foe. Haste, arm me for the fight,
Bring forth my greaves, my hauberk, my strong spear.

CHOR. Dear to thy country, son of Œdipus,
Be not thy rage like his, whom we abhor.
Thebes has no dearth of valiant sons t' oppose
These Argives; and their blood may be aton'd;
The death of brothers by each other slain,
That stain no expiation can atone.

ETEO. Cou'd man endure defeat without dishonour,
'Twere well: but to the dead nothing remains,
Save glory: to the dastard, and the base
Fame never pays that honourable meed.

CHOR. Ah, whither dost thou rush? Let not revenge,

That wildly raving shakes the furious spear,
Transport thee thus. Check this hot tide of passion.

ETEO. No: since the God impels me, I will on.
And let the race of Laius, let them all,
Abhorr'd by Phœbus, in this storm of fate
Sink down to deep Cocytus' dreary flood.

CHOR. Cruel and murd'rous is the rage that fires thee
To deeds of death, to unpermitted blood;
And sorrow is the bitter fruit it yields.

ETEO. My father's curse, a stern relentless fury,
Rolling her tearless eyes, looks on and tells me
Glory pursues her prize, disdaining fate.

CHOR. Ah, rave not thus: Fame will not call thee base
Or cowardly, if well thy life be order'd.
The gloomy fury enters not his house,
Whose hands present th' accepted sacrifice.

ETEO. The Gods accept not us; and on our fall
Glory attends admiring: Why then sue
For grace, with servile fear cringing to death?

CHOR. For that it is at hand: its terrible pow'r
Sooth'd by th' abatement of this fiery valour,
May come perchance more gentle; now it rages.

ETEO. My father's imprecations rage, and haunt
My sleep: too true the real visions rise,
And wave the bloody sword that parts his kingdoms.

CHOR. Let us persuade thee, tho' thou scorn'st our sex.

ETEO. What wou'd thy wish have done? Speak it in brief.

CHOR. Ah, go not this way: go not to this gate.

ETEO. My soul's on fire; nor shall thy words retard me.

CHOR. Conquest, that spurns at right, offends the Gods.

ETEO. Ill suit these tame words the arm'd warrior's ear.

CHOR. And canst thou wish to spill thy brother's blood?

ETEO. By the just Gods he shall not 'scape my vengeance*.

* The English reader will allow, that in variety of character and dignity of

CHOR. She comes, the fierce tremendous pow'r *,
And harrows up my soul with dread;
No gentle Goddess, prompt to show'r
Her blessings on some favour'd head.
I know her now, the prophetess of ill,
And vengeance ratifies each word,
The votive fury, fiend abhorr'd;
The father's curses to fulfil
Dreadful she comes, and with her brings
The brood of fate, that laps the blood of kings.

The rude barbarian, from the mines
Of Scythia, o'er the lots presides;

expression this is one of the finest scenes ever produced by a dramatic author. The devices on the shields, the spirit of the warriors, and the defiance of Eteocles, all proclaim that wonderful δεινοτης, or tragic sublimity, which characterised Æschylus. What can we think then of the unfeeling criticism of P. Brumoy? who says, Cette scene est fort longue, et n'a pu être interessante que pour les Atheniens qui connoissoient Thebes, et les chefs, dont on va parler. R. P. JODRELL.

* As soon as Œdipus came to be informed that he had killed his father Laius, and that Jocasta, by whom he had two sons and two daughters, was his mother, in the transport of his grief he tore out his eyes. When his sons were grown up to man's estate, they shut up their father now old and blind, and agreed to divide his kingdom between them: Œdipus deeply resented this treatment, and uttered the most horrid execrations against them, praying that they might divide the kingdom by the sword. Statius knew how to make a fine use of this. How fatal a father's curse was esteemed, we have seen in the Prometheus. To prevent its dreaded effects, the brothers agreed to reign each a year alternately, and each alternately to leave the kingdom: Eteocles, as the elder, first assumed the sovereignty; but upon the expiration of his year refused to resign it to his brother: hence this war, their father's prophetic curse, which is greatly represented through this tragedy as an avenging fury: even the sword is personified, and represented as a rude barbarian from the mines of Scythia, and advancing over the seas, attended with mischief and war, as a cruel umpire to divide the kingdom between the brothers, but assigning to each no larger a share than their dead bodies could occupy on the earth. These are the conceptions of a genius truly sublime, and which distinguish Æschylus and Shakespeare from all other writers.

Ruthless to each his share assigns,
And the contested realm divides:
To each allots no wider a domain
Than, on the cold earth as they lie,
Their breathless bodies occupy,
Regardless of an ampler reign.
Such narrow compass does the sword,
A cruel umpire, their high claims afford.

Conflicting thus in furious mood,
Shou'd each by other's hand be slain;
Shou'd the black fountain of their blood
Spout forth, and drench the thirsty plain;
Who shall the solemn expiation pay?
Who with pure lavers cleanse the dead?
Miseries to miseries thus succeed,
And vengeance marks this house her prey,
Swift to chastise the first ill deed;
And the son's sons in her deep fury bleed.

The first ill deed from Laius sprung:
Thrice from his shrine these words of fate
Awful the Pythian Phœbus sung,
"Die childless, wou'dst thou save the state."
Urg'd by his friends, as round the free wine flows,
To Love's forbidden rites he flies.
By the son's hand the father dies.
He in the chaste ground, whence he arose,
Was bold t' implant the deadly root;
And madness rear'd each baleful-spreading shoot.

Wide o'er misfortune's surging tide
Billows succeeding billows spread;
Shou'd one, its fury spent, subside,
Another lifts its boist'rous head,

And foams around the city's shatter'd prow.
But shou'd the rough tempestuous wave
Force through our walls too slight to save,
And lay the thin partition low,
Will not the flood's resistless sway
Sweep kings and people, town and realms away?

The dreadful curse pronounc'd of old
To vengeance rouses ruthless hate;
And slaughter, ranging uncontroll'd,
Pursues the hideous work of fate.
Wreck'd in the storm the great, the brave, the wise
Are sunk beneath the roaring tide.
Such was the chief, this city's pride,
Dear to each God in yon bright skies,
Whose prudence took our dread away,
The rav'ning monster gorg'd with human prey.

Where now the chief? His glories where?
Fall'n, fall'n. From the polluted bed
Indignant madness, wild despair,
And agonizing grief succeed.
The light of Heav'n, himself, his sons abhorr'd,
Darkling he feeds his gloomy rage,
Bids them, with many a curse, engage,
And part their empire with the sword.
That curse now holds its unmov'd state,
The furious fiend charg'd with the work of fate.

SOLDIER, CHORUS.

SOLD. Have comfort, virgins, your fond parents' joy;
The city hath escap'd the servile yoke,
And the proud vaunts of these impetuous men
Are fall'n: the storm is ceas'd, and the rough waves,
That threaten'd to o'erwhelm us, are subsided.

Our tow'rs stand firm, each well-appointed chief
Guarded his charge with manly fortitude.
All at six gates is well: but at the seventh
The God, to whom that mystic number's sacred *,
Royal Apollo, took his awful stand,
Repaying on the race of Œdipus
The ill-advis'd transgression of old Laius.

CHOR. What new affliction hath befall'n the city?

SOLD. The city is preserv'd: the brother kings
Are fall'n, each slaughter'd by the other's hand.

CHOR. Who? What? Thy words distract my sense with fear.

SOLD. Be calm, and hear. The sons of Œdipus.

* Ἑβδομαγέτας Ἀπόλλων.——ἑβδόμη, ἱερὸν ἦμαρ,
Τῇ γὰρ Ἀπόλλωνα χρυσαόρα γείνατο Λητώ.

Hesiod tells us here that the seventh is a sacred day, because on that day Latona brought forth Apollo with the golden sword, M. Court de Gebelin says with the golden hair, à chevelure dorée. That the seventh day of each month was sacred to Apollo, because he was born on that day, was true only in the allegorical sense: this was taken from the philosophical ideas of the Egyptians, brought into Greece by Pythagoras, respecting the harmony of the universe, founded on the seven planets and their relations, and in general upon the number seven. Nonnus gives the planets the same arrangements which they have in the musical system of the Egyptians, where the sun placed in the fourth rank, or in the middle of the progression, terminates and begins the two quaternions, or fours, that form the system.—Gebelin's Allegories Orientales, p. 90. Milton knew how to make the finest use of this idea of the harmony of the spheres,

How often from the steep
Of echoing hill, or thicket, have we heard
Celestial voices to the midnight air,
Sole, or responsive to each other's note,
Singing their great Creator? Oft in bands
While they keep watch, or nightly rounding walk,
With heav'nly touch of instrumental sounds,
In *full harmonic number* join'd, their songs
Divide the night, and lift our thoughts to heav'n.

P. L. b. iv. l. 680.

CHOR. Ah me! I am the prophetess of ill.
SOLD. It is indeed too certain: both are dead.
CHOR. Came they to this? 'Tis horrible; yet tell me.
SOLD. Brother by brother's hands dreadfully slain.
CHOR. And has one common fate involv'd them both?
SOLD. It has indeed destroy'd th' unhappy race.
Here then is cause for lamentation, cause
For joy: joy, that the city stands secure;
But lamentation, that the chiefs are fall'n.
To both the rigid steel, forg'd in the mines
Of Scythia, shares their whole inheritance;
And each receives but that small tract of earth,
Which serves him for a tomb; their father's curse,
Fatally cruel, sweeps them both away.
The city is preserv'd; but the dust drinks
The blood of the brothers, each by th' other slain.

CHORUS.

MON. O Jove supreme,
And all ye Gods that guard this state,
Shou'd I the joyful Pæan raise,
And celebrate your praise?
Your guardian care, propitious pow'rs,
Preserv'd our walls, preserv'd our tow'rs!
Or bid the solemn, doleful strain
Lament the chiefs, the brothers slain;
A mournful theme;
Thro' mad ambition's impious pride
Childless, unbless'd, in youth's warm tide
Fall'n, fall'n by too severe a fate?
STRO. Thou gloomy curse, too prompt to ill,
A father's vengeance to fulfil,
I feel, I feel thee in my shiv'ring breast!
Soon as I heard th' unhappy slain

Lay welt'ring on th' ensanguin'd plain,
With inspiration's raging pow'r possest,
I form'd the funeral strains to flow
With all the melody of woe.

ANTIS. Thou fell, ill-omen'd, cruel spear,
Cou'dst thou the father's curses hear,
And wing'd with fury drink the brother's gore?
Now, Laius, boast the frantic deed:
Thy disobedience has its meed;
The fatal oracle delays no more.
These are your works; and round them stand
Horrors, and death's avenging band.

EPOD. Is this a tale of fear-created woe?
In very deed before our eyes
[The dead bodies of ETEOCLES and POLYNICES are here brought on the Stage.]
A twofold scene of misery lies,
And from a double slaughter double horrors flow;
Whilst grief on grief, and groan on groan
Rush in, and make this house their own.
Come then, ye virgins, from the mournful bands,
To wail the mighty slain;
And ever and anon, at each sad pause
The dying cadence draws,
Together smite your high-rais'd hands,
The sullen sound attemper'd to the strain,
That with many a dismal note
Accompanies the sable boat,
Slow as its sails on Acheron's dull stream,
Wafting its joyless numbers o'er
To that unlovely, dreary shore,
Which Phœbus never views, nor the light's golden beam.

1st. SEMI. But see, to aid this mournful office come
Antigone and Ismene: they besure
Will, from their lovely gentleness of soul,

Pour for their brothers' loss their sorrows wild.
Behoves us then, e'er the sad tale shall reach
Their ear, with meet solemnity to raise
The thrilling strain, and chaunt the hymn of death.

2d. SEMI. Unhappy in your brothers, most unhappy
Of all, that o'er their swelling bosoms bind
The decent vest, I weep, I breathe the sigh
Warm from my heart, that feels for your afflictions.

ANTIGONE, ISMENE, CHORUS.

1st. SEMI. Ah, what frantic rage possest
Each unyielding, ruthless breast,
Wisdom scorn'd, and friends defi'd,
By threat'ning ills unterrifi'd,
'Gainst their father's house to bear
Wretched they, the fatal spear!

2d. SEMI. Wretched they a wretched death
Found their house's fall beneath.

1st. SEMI. Each the ruin'd palace o'er
Strove t' extend his envied pow'r:
Each unrivall'd and alone
Proudly strove to seize the throne.
But the sword their contest ends,
Not the lovely strife of friends.
Hate, that never knows remorse,
Fury of the father's curse,
Thro' their sides with horrid sway
Urg'd the sharp steel's purple way.

2d. SEMI. Charg'd with death thou cruel curse,
Each hath felt thy fatal force.

1st. SEMI. Brother pierc'd by brother dies,
Low their house in ruin lies.

2d. SEMI. From the father's furious breath
Discord rose, and rage, and death.

1st. SEMI. Grief with wild, distracted air
Thro' the city leads despair;
The tow'rs on high, the vales below,
Sigh the sullen notes of woe.
To other lords the large domains,
And the envied pow'r remains;
Of the territories wide,
For which they fought, for which they died,
Each receives an equal share,
Fiercely parted by the spear:
Cruel arbiter of fate,
Friends thy rude decisions hate.
2d. SEMI. Pierc'd with steel each finds his end:
Pierc'd with steel they haste t' attend
Their fathers, by like bloody death,
In the yawning grave beneath.
1st. SEMI. Grief, that rends the tortur'd breast,
Deep with real woes possest,
Tears fast streaming from her eyes
From the haunts of pleasure flies,
Anguish misery, all her own,
Sadly pours the hollow groan;
Whilst the ruin'd palace round
Echo answers to the sound;
And, each frightful pause between,
From her airy shell unseen,
Listens to the funeral strain,
Wailing the unhappy slain;
Wailing all the dreadful woes
That from madding discord rose;
Many a friend among the dead,
Whilst the hostile legions bleed.
2d. SEMI. Far beyond each sorrowing dame,
Each that bears a mother's name,

Each that groans upon the earth,
Hapless she that gave them birth.
She, to share her bed and throne,
As an husband took her son:
These she bore, and this their fate,
Brother slain by brother's hate.

ISM. Brothers they, by birth allied,
Spread the mutual carnage wide:
Unfriendly each to other's life,
In the madding rage of strife.
But their hatred is no more,
On the earth, all stain'd with gore,
Their stream of life unites, and shows
From one common source it rose.

CHOR. Umpire of the strife of kings,
Forth the barbarous stranger springs:
Ruthless issuing from the flame
O'er the seas the keen steel came.
Ruthless came the realm to share,
Big with mischief, wasting war,
And accurs'd, without remorse,
Executes a father's curse.

ANT. They have the wretched share they chose,
Share of heav'n-appointed woes *:
And the rich, contested prize
Deep beneath earth's bosom lies.

ISM. It falls, the royal house, it falls;
Ruin lords it o'er its walls;
And the furies howl around,
Notes of shrill, soul-piercing sound.
Slaughter, reeking yet with gore,
Raises high each gate before,

* This passage is inexplicably obscure. The translator is obliged to leave it so.

Where they fought, and where they bled,
Trophies of the mighty dead;
And, the rival chiefs subdued,
Ceases from her work of blood.

ANT. Wounded thou gavest the fatal wound.
ISM. Dying thy hand its vengeance found.
ANT. By the spear 'twas thine to kill.
ISM. And the spear's thy blood to spill.
ANT. Fierce thy thought, and fell thy deed.
ISM. Fierce recoil'd it on thy head.
ANT. Flow my tears.
ISM. My sorrows flow.
ANT. He, that slew, shall lie as low.
Madness mingles with my moans.
ISM. Heaves my heart, and bursts with groans.
ANT. Thou shalt claim the ceaseless tear.
ISM. To my soul wast thou most dear.
ANT. Thee thy friend stretch'd on the plain.
ISM. And by thee thy friend is slain.
ANT. Twice to see.
ISM. And twice to tell.
ANT. Near us do these sorrows dwell.
ISM. Near us dwell these sorrows, near
As to sisters brothers are.
ANT. Fate, in all thy terrors clad,
Œdipus, thy awful shade,
Erinnys, frowning black as night,
Dreadful, dreadful is your might!
ISM. Fierce from flight achiev'd he deeds,
At which my heart with anguish bleeds.
ANT. Nor is he return'd that slew.
ISM. Safe himself, on death he flew.
ANT. Death upon himself he brought.
ISM. And to him destruction wrought.

ANT. Sprung from an unhappy line.
ISM. In one unhappy fate they join.
ANT. Mournful, threefold misery.
ISM. Sad to tell.
ANT. And sad to see.
Fate in all thy terrors clad,
Œdipus, thy awful shade,
Erinnys, frowning black as night,
Dreadful, dreadful is your might!
Thou their pow'r hast past, hast known.
ISM. Soon this knowledge was thy own.
ANT. To the town advancing near.
ISM. Lifting high thy purple spear,
Burning fierce with enmity.
ANT. Sad to tell.
ISM. And sad to see.
ANT. Ah, what woes on us await!
ISM. And our house oppress'd with fate:
Thro' the land the evils spread,
Falling heaviest on my head.
ANT. I th' afflicting burden share,
Equal sorrow, equal care.
ISM. Eteocles, from thee it flows,
Author of these mournful woes.
ANT. Each the gushing tear demands.
ISM. Each with frenzy arm'd his hands.
ANT. Where shall we with pious care
The sepulchral earth prepare?
ISM. Where the hallow'd ground shall spread
Awful honours o'er the dead.
ANT. Their unhappy father nigh
Let the mournful ruins lie.

ANTIGONE, ISMENE, CHORUS, HERALD.

HER. My office leads me to proclaim the mandate.

Of the great rulers of the Theban state.
Eteocles, for that he lov'd his country,
They have decreed with honour to inter.
To shield her from her foes he fought, he fell,
Her sacred rites rever'd, unstain'd with blame,
Where glory calls the valiant youth to bleed,
He bled. Thus far of him am I bid say.
Of Polynices, that his corpse shall lie
Cast out unburied, to the dogs a prey;
Because his spear, had not the Gods opposed,
Threaten'd destruction to the land of Thebes.
In death the vengeance of his country's Gods
Pursues him, for he scorn'd them, and presum'd
To lead a foreign host, and storm the town.
Be this then his reward, to lie expos'd
To rav'nous birds, unhonoured, of the rites*
That grace the dead, libations at the tomb,
The solemn strain, that 'midst the exequies
Breathes from the friendly voice of woe, depriv'd.
These are the mandates of the Theban rulers.

ANT. And to these Theban rulers I declare,
If none besides dare bary him, myself
Will do that office, heedless of the danger,
And think no shame to disobey the state,
Paying the last sad duties to a brother.

* To be deprived of the rites of sepulture was to the ancients the greatest of all calamities, much worse than death itself. Euripides has a fine tragedy, the whole distress of which turns upon this idea; a translation of this will shortly be given to the public, and the reader may expect to find the subject more fully examined.—As the Chorus were by their office to be exact observers of the laws religious and civil, their task was here very nice and difficult. Not to assist in burying the dead, were impious: not to obey the mandates of their rulers, were an offence against the laws of their country: the poet with great judgment leaves this interesting point undetermined, in the only manner that remained not to give offence.

Nature has tender ties, and strongly joins
The offspring of the same unhappy mother,
And the same wretched father. In this task
Shrink not, my soul, to share the ills he suffer'd,
Involuntary ills; and whilst life warms
This breast, be bold to show a sister's love
To a dead brother. Shall the famish'd wolves
Fatten on him? Away with such a thought.
I, tho' a woman, will prepare his tomb,
Dig up the earth, and bear it in this bosom,
In these fine folds to cover him. Go to.
I will not be oppos'd. Fruitful invention
Shall devise means to execute the task.

HER. I charge thee not t' offend the state in this.

ANT. I charge thee waste not words on me in vain.

HER. Rage soon inflames a people freed from danger.

ANT. Inflame them thou, he shall not lie unburied.

HER. Wilt thou thus grace the object of their hate?

ANT. Long have they strove to load him with dishonour.

HER. Not till he shook this land with hostile arms.

ANT. Great were his wrongs, and greatly he reveng'd them.

HER. Injur'd by one, his vengeance burst on all.

ANT. Discord, the meanest of the Gods, will do
What she resolves; spare then thy tedious speech,
And be assur'd that I will bury him.

HER. Self-will'd, and unadvis'd! I must declare this.

ANTIGONE, ISMENE, CHORUS.

1st. SEMI. With what a ruthless and destructive rage
The Furies hurl their vengeful shafts around,
And desolate the house of Œdipus!
What then remains for me? and how resolve?
Can I forbear to mourn thee, to attend thee
And the sad tomb? Yet duty to the state,

And reverence to its mandates, awes my soul.
Thou * shalt have many to lament thy fall:
Whilst he †, unwept, unpitied, unattended,
Save by a sister's solitary sorrows,
Sinks to the shades. Approve you this resolve?

2d. SEMI. To those, that wail the fate of Polynices,
Let the state act its pleasure. We will go,
Attend his funeral rites, and aid his sister
To place him in the earth. Such sorrows move
The common feelings of humanity;
And, where the deed is just, the state approves it.

1st. SEMI. And we with him, as justice and the state
Concur to call us. Next th' immortal Gods,
And Jove's high pow'r, this valiant youth came forth
The guardian of his country, and repell'd
Th' assault of foreign foes, whose raging force
Rush'd like a torrent threat'ning to o'erwhelm us.

* Eteocles. † Polynices.

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AGAMEMNON.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

WATCHMAN

CLYTEMNESTRA

HERALD

AGAMEMNON

CASSANDRA

ÆGISTHUS

CHORUS of ARGIVE SENATORS.

AGAMEMNON.

IN this tragedy the reader will find the strongest traces of the genius of Æschylus, and the most distinguishing proofs of his skill. Great in his conception, bold and daring in his metaphors, strong in his passions, he here touches the heart with uncommon emotions. The odes are particularly sublime, and the oracular spirit, that breathes through them, adds a wonderful elevation and dignity to them. Short as the part of Agamemnon is, the poet has the address to throw such an amiable dignity around him, that we soon become interested in his favour, and are predisposed to lament his fate. The character of Clytemnestra is finely marked; an high-spirited, artful, close, determined, dangerous woman. But the poet has no where exerted such efforts of his genius, as in the scene where Cassandra appears: As a prophetess, she gives every mark of the divine inspiration, from the dark and distant hint, through all the noble imagery of the prophetic enthusiasm; till, as the catastrophe advances, she more and more plainly declares it: As a suffering

princess, her grief is plaintive, lively, and piercing; yet she goes to meet her death, which she clearly foretels, with a firmness worthy the daughter of Priam and the sister of Hector: Nothing can be more animated or more interesting than this scene. The conduct of the poet through this play is exquisitely judicious; every scene gives us some obscure hint, or ominous presage, enough to keep our attention always raised, and to prepare us for the event; even the studied caution of Clytemnestra is finely managed to produce that effect; whilst the secrecy, with which she conducts her design, keeps us in suspense, and prevents a discovery, till we hear the dying groans of her murdered husband.

It is to be lamented that a late amiable poet, in his tragedy on this subject, which too he wished to have esteemed as classical, should have deviated so far from his great original, particularly in the character of Clytemnestra: but as he wanted strength of genius to imitate the noble simplicity of Æschylus, his taste led him to take Seneca for his model; and he has succeeded accordingly.

The scene of this play is at Argos, before the palace of Agamemnon.

AGAMEMNON.

THE WATCHMAN *.

YE fav'ring Gods, relieve me from this toil:
Fix'd, as a dog, on Agamemnon's roof
I watch the live-long year, observing hence
The host of stars, that in the spangled skies
Take their bright stations, and to mortals bring
Winter and summer; radiant rulers, when
They set, or rising glitter thro' the night.

* This watchman had his station assigned him upon the royal palace at Argos, to observe the signal which Agamemnon had promised to give Clytemnestra, when Troy should be taken. This specularis indicatio, this information by beacons, was said to have been invented by Sinon in the time of the Trojan war; but Æschylus had a poetic right to attribute it to his hero. The man, after nine years passed in this sleepless post, had reason to complain of a task which had fixed him to the roof of Agamemnon, like a dog; not that this was a debasing idea, that animal being the emblem of fidelity, vigilance, and sagacious discernment of friend from enemy, as the learned reader may find it accounted for in very good words by Plutarch in his Treatise on Isis and Osiris: they were therefore the usual night-guards of great houses; Alcinous in the Odyssey had them of gold and silver,

Χρύσειοι δ' ἑκάτερθε καὶ ἀργύρεοι κύνες ἦσαν
Δῶμα φυλασσόμενοι.

Here now I watch, if haply I may see
The blazing torch, whose flame brings news from Troy,
The signal of its ruin: these high hopes
My royal mistress, thinking on her lord*,
Feeds in her heart. Meanwhile the dews of night
Fall on my couch, unvisited by dreams;
For fear, lest sleep shou'd close my eyes, repels
The soft intruder. When my spirits prompt me
To raise the song, or hum the sullen notes
Preventing slumber, then I sigh, and wail
The state of this unhappy house, no more
Well-order'd as of old. But may my toils
Be happily reliev'd! Blaze, thou bright flame,
Herald of joy, blaze thro' the gloomy shades.—
And it does blaze.—Hail, thou auspicious flame,
That streaming thro' the night denouncest joy,
Welcom'd with many a festal dance in Argos!—
In the queen's ear I'll holla this, and rouse her
From her soft couch with speed†, that she may teach
The royal dome to echo with the strains
Of choral warblings greeting this blest fire,
Bright sign that Troy is taken. Nor shall I

* One is surprised and sorry to find the excellent Stanley interpreting ἀνδρόβουλον here by viro insidiantem, as if this Watchman had penetrated into the horrid design of Clytemnestra. He had indeed observed, that the house was not now well ordered as of old; and he gives some humourous hints of the indecent conduct of the queen; but further than this his penetration reached not. Had the great secret been thus early discovered, it would have at once removed that suspense and solicitude for the event, which the poet has the address to keep up throughout the play, in which we shall see cause to admire his art and judgment.

† It is generally agreed, that Troy was taken in the night; this supplied Euripides with the subject of a very pathetic ode in his Hecuba: thus Virgil,

Invadunt urbem somno vinoque sepultam.

Forbear the prelude to the dance before her:
For by this watch, so prosperously concluded,
I to my masters shall assure good fortune.
Shall I then see my king return'd, once more
To grace this house? and shall this hand once more
Hang on his friendly hand?—I cou'd unfold
A tale.—But, hush; my tongue is chain'd: these walls,
Cou'd they but speak, wou'd make discoveries.
There are who know this; and to them this hint
Were plain: to those, that know it not, mysterious.

CHOR. The tenth slow year rolls on, since great in arms
The noble sons of Atreus, each exalted
To majesty and empire, royal brothers,
Led hence a thousand ships, the Argive fleet,
Big with the fate of Priam and of Troy;
A warlike preparation; their bold breasts
Breathing heroic ardour to high deeds;
Like vultures, which their unplumed offspring lost*,
Whirl many a rapid flight, for that their toil
To guard their young was vain: 'till some high pow'r,
For they are dear to Phœbus, dear to Pan,
And Jove, with pity hears their shrill-voic'd grief,
And sends, tho' late, the fury to avenge
Their plunder'd nests on the unpitying spoilers.
So now the pow'r of hospitable Jove †

* The religious turn, which the poet has given to this simile, adds a solemn grace to the beautiful imagery, the vulture being sacred to Apollo, as the god of augury, to Pan as the patron of hunters, and to Jupiter as the protector of kings.

† We receive the highest ideas of the civilized manners and social sense of the ancients, from their religious observation of the rights of hospitality; we have many instances of this in Homer, particularly in the interview of Glaucus and Diomede. Jupiter himself was the protector of these laws, hence his title of ξένιος: to these laws Ovid alludes,

Ausus es hospitii temeratis advena sacris
Legitimam nuptæ sollicitare fidem.

Arms against Paris, for th' oft-wedded dame*,
The sons of Atrèus, bent to plunge the hosts
Of Greece and Troy in all the toils, that sink
The body down, the firm knee bow'd in dust,
And the strong spear, e'er conquest crowns their helms,
Shiver'd in battle. These are what they are,
And Fate directs th' event: nor the bent knee,
Libation pure, or supplicating tear,
Can sooth the stern rage of those merciless pow'rs
In whose cold shrine no hallow'd flame ascends †.
But we, our age-enfeebled limbs unfit,
For martial toils, inglorious here remain,
The staff supporting our weak steps, like children:
For as the infant years have not attain'd
The military vigour, wither'd age
Crawls thro' the streets like helpless infancy,
And passes as a day-dream.—But what tidings,
What circumstances of fair event hath reach'd
Thy royal ears, daughter of Tyndarus,
Inducing thee to send the victims round?
The shrines of all the Gods, whose guardian cares
Watch o'er this state, be they enthron'd in Heav'n,
Or rule beneath the Earth, blaze with thy presents;
And from th' imperial dome a length'ned line
Of torches shoot their lustre to the skies.
O tell me what is fit for me to know,
And prudence suffers to be told: speak peace
To this anxiety, which one while swells
Presaging ill, and one while from the victims
Catches a gleam of hope, whose cheering ray
Breaks thro' the gloom that darkens o'er my soul.

* Helena was said to have been carried off by Theseus, before she was wedded to Menelaus.

† The Fates and the Furies, at whose rites no fire was used.

STRO. It swells upon my soul; I feel the pow'r *
To hail th' auspicious hour,
When, their brave hosts marching in firm array,
The heroes led the way.
The fire of youth glows in each vein,
And heav'n-born confidence inspires the strain.
Pleas'd the omen to record,
That to Troy's ill-fated strand
Led each monarch, mighty lord,
Led the bold confederate band,
The strong spear quiv'ring in their vengeful hand.
Full in each royal chieftain's view,
A royal eagle whirls his flight;
In plumage one of dusky hue,
And one his dark wings edg'd with white;
Swift to th' imperial mansion take their way,
And in their armed talons bear,
Seiz'd in its flight, a pregnant hare,
And in those splendid seats enjoy their prey.

Sound high the strain, the swelling notes prolong,
Till conquest listens to the raptur'd song.

ANTIS. The venerable seer, whose skill divine †

* P. Brumoy, complaining of the obscurity of this tragedy, says, il y a tant de métaphores, de figures, et des tours extraordinaires, qu'on ne sçauroit se vanter de les avoir tous démêlés. And of this ode, l'on peut bien défier toute plume Françoise de rendre ce morceau, tant il est defiguré et entortillé. Discouraging this: for how shall the English grey-goose-quill hope to give the critical reader satisfaction, where the plume Françoise despairs? Essayons cependant.

The Chorus, seized with a sacred inspiration, records the omen which was given to the brother kings on their march from Argos. Two eagles, the one of dark plumage, the strongest and the swiftest of the kind, the other of a species somewhat inferior, seize a pregnant hare, and bear it in their talons to the palace of Agamemnon.

† The fate-foretelling Chalcas explains the omen, that the imperial eagles

Knows what the Fates design,
On each bold chief, that for the battle burns,
His glowing eye-ball turns;
And thus in high prophetic strains
The rav'ning eagles and their prey explains:
" Priam's haughty town shall fall,
" Slow they roll, the destined hours,
" Fate and fury shake her wall,
" Vengeance wide the ruin pours,
" And conquest seizes all her treasur'd stores.
" Ah, may no storm from th' angry sky
" Burst dreadful o'er this martial train,
" Nor check their ardour, flaming high
" To pour the war o'er Troy's proud plain!
" Wrath kindles in the chaste Diana's breast:
" Gorg'd with the pregnant mother's blood,
" And e'er the birth, her hapless brood,
" Hell-hounds of Jove, she hates your horrid feast.

" Sound high the strain, the swelling notes prolong,
" Till conquest listens to the raptur'd song.

denote the royal brothers, and the capture of the hare their success in taking Troy; but as the hare was pregnant, it was under the immediate protection of Diana, who, as goddess of the chase, was the guardian of the infant race of all animals that are feræ naturæ: this the prophet fears is an indication of the anger of that goddess.

This passage is very obscure, and certainly nothing elucidated by the annotator, who sends us to the sparrows at Aulis for its interpretation; whereas the precise words of the Chorus confine us to a single omen given to the kings when they were marching from the royal palace at Argos,

Μόρσιμ' ἀπ' ὀρνίθων
Ὀδίων οἴκοις βασιλείοις. v. 164. Æschyl.

nor will φιλομάστοις ἐθρεπτάλοισι permit us to think of unfledged birds: leaving Pauw and his adversaries then to settle what he calls ineptius grammaticorum, we thankfully adopt the very beautiful image he has given us, and proceed.

EPOD. "The virgin Goddess of the chase,
"Fair from the spangled dew-drops that adorn
"The breathing flow'rets of the morn,
"Protectress of the infant race
"Of all that haunt the tangled grove,
"Or o'er the rugged mountains rove,
"She, beauteous queen, commands me to declare
"What by the royal birds is shown,
"Signal of conquest, omen fair,
"But darken'd by her awful frown.
"God of the distant-wounding bow,
"Thee, Pæan, thee I call; hear us, and aid*;
"Ah, may not the offended maid
"Give the sullen gales to blow,
"Adverse to this eager train,
"And bar th' unnavigable main:
"Nor other sacrifice demand,
"At whose barbaric rites no feast is spread;
"But discord rears her horrid head,
"And calls around her murd'rous band:
"Leagued with hate, and fraud, and fear,
"Nor king, nor husband they revere;
"Indignant o'er a daughter weep,
"And burn to stamp their vengeance deep."
Prophetic thus the reverend Chalcas spoke,
Marking th' imperial eagles' whirling wings;
From his rapt lips the joyful presage broke,
Success and glory to th' embattled kings.

* The prophet, impressed with the idea of the anger of Diana, invokes Apollo to appease his sister, that she might not raise any adverse winds to retard the expedition, nor demand any sacrifice of horrid and barbaric rites: by the first alluding to the contrary winds which afterwards detained the fleet at Aulis; by the latter, to the sacrifice of Iphigenia.—Thus far the Chorus has recorded the prophecy of Chalcas, and with as little obscurity as one has reason to expect in such oracular answers, except in the beginning of the epode, where the text is unhappily corrupted.

Sound high the strain, th' according notes prolong,
Till conquest listens to the raptur'd song.

STRO. 1. O thou *, that sit'st supreme above,
Whatever name thou deign'st to hear,
Unblam'd may I pronounce thee Jove!
Immers'd in deep and holy thought,
If rightly I conjecture ought,
Thy pow'r I must revere:
Else vainly tost the anxious mind
Nor truth, nor calm repose can find.
Feeble and helpless to the light
The proudest of man's race arose,
Tho' now, exulting in his might,
Dauntless he rushes on his foes;
Great as he is, in dust he lies;
He meets a greater, and he dies.

ANTIS. 1. He that, when conquest brightens round †;

* The Chorus now reassumes its proper character, and begins this ode with a solemn address to Jupiter, illud, quicquid est, summum, if that name were agreeable to him; for the ancients in their invocations of the Gods, were under a superstitious dread of offending them, should they speak to them by a name ungrateful to their ears, or omit the name most pleasing to them. Him the Chorus reveres, as in him alone their anxious thoughts could find repose. Whoever he may be, that without this pious reverence exults in his might, he enjoys but a short-lived glory,

He meets a greater, and he dies.

(The old Scholiast understands this of the Titans; a modern critic agrees with him, but at the same time clearly sees that Xerxes and Darius are adumbrated.) This is a general reflection.

† On the other hand, the man, who amidst his successes pays his grateful vows to Jupiter, shall have his prosperity continued to him. Though sometimes, when the God leads mortals to wisdom, he effects his purpose by afflictions; the memory of which makes a deep impression on the sufferer, and compels him to be wise: even this is acknowledged as the effect of divine grace. This is the address of the Chorus to Jupiter, sober, manly, rational, and a fine prelude to the afflictions of Agamemnon next to be mentioned.

Swells the triumphal strain to Jove,
Shall ever with success be crown'd.
Yet often, when to wisdom's seat
Jove deigns to guide man's erring feet,
His virtues to improve;
He to affliction gives command
To form him with her chast'ning hand:
The memory of her rigid lore,
On the sad heart imprinted deep,
Attends him thro' day's active hour,
Nor in the night forsakes his sleep.
Instructed thus thy grace we own,
O thou, that sit'st on Heav'n's high throne!

STRO. 2. When now in Aulis' rolling bay *
His course the refluent floods refus'd,
And sick'ning with inaction lay
In dead repose th' exhausted train,
Did the firm chief of chance complain?
No prophet he accus'd;
His eyes towards Chalcis bent he stood,
And silent mark'd the surging flood.
Sullen the winds from Strymon sweep,
Mischance and famine in the blast,
Ceaseless torment the angry deep,
The cordage rend, the vessels waste,
With tedious and severe delay
Wear the frésh flow'r of Greece away.

ANTIS. 2. When, in Diana's name, the seer †

* The anger of Diana now shows itself, and the Grecian fleet is detained by adverse winds at Aulis; the consequence of this is briefly, but finely described; but even under this mortifying calamity the hero shews no impious discontent, accuses no god nor man; but stands in a melancholy silence with his eyes fixed on an opposite island, and observing the refluent flood.

† In the midst of this distress, the prophet declared, that the anger of the Goddess would not be appeased, nor would the winds permit the fleet to sail

Pronounc'd the dreadful remedy
More than the stormy sea severe,
Each chieftain stood in grief profound,
And smote his sceptre on the ground:
Then with a rising sigh
The monarch, whilst the big tears roll,
Express'd the anguish of his soul;
" Dreadful the sentence: not t' obey,
" Vengeance and ruin close us round:
" Shall then the sire his daughter slay,
" In youth's fresh bloom with beauty crown'd?
" Shall on these hands her warm blood flow?
" Cruel alternative of woe!

STRO. 3. " This royal fleet, this martial host,
" The cause of Greece, shall I betray,
" The monarch in the father lost?
" To calm these winds, to smooth this flood,
" Diana's wrath a virgin's blood *
" Demands: 'tis our's t' obey."

out of the harbour, but by the sacrifice of Iphigenia, the beautiful daughter of Agamemnon: the anguish of his soul, and the conflicting passions of the father and the king, are here pathetically described, till at length the king prevails.

Utcunque ferent ea facta nepotes,
Vincit amor patriæ, laudumque immensa cupido.

* There is something horrid in the superstition of ancient paganism, which often impelled even the most religious persons to actions that were shocking to humanity, and at the same time left them exposed to infamy and punishment, as if they had been voluntarily guilty. It was in the Fates, that Œdipus should kill his father, and marry his mother; by the very methods which he took to avoid the completion of this oracle, and those the wisest which human providence could suggest, he was entangled in the fatal net; yet the anger of the Gods pursued him even to ruin, and the extermination of his family. Orestes was commanded by Apollo to kill his mother, with threats of the severest vengeance should he presume to disobey; but no sooner was the deed done, than he was pursued by the Furies, and haunted even to distraction. So here Agamemnon has this cruel alternative proposed to him,

Bound in necessity's iron chain
Reluctant nature strives in vain:
Impure, unholy thoughts succeed,
And dark'ning o'er his bosom roll;
Whilst madness prompts the ruthless deed,
Tyrant of the misguided soul:
Stern on the fleet he rolls his eyes,
And dooms the hateful sacrifice.

ANTIS. 3. Arm'd in a woman's cause, around
Fierce for the war the princes rose;
No place affrighted pity found.
In vain the virgin's streaming tear,
Her cries in vain, her pleading pray'r,
Her agonizing woes.
Cou'd the fond father hear unmov'd?
The Fates decreed: the king approv'd:
Then to th' attendants gave command
Decent her flowing robes to bind;
Prone on the altar with strong hand
To place her, like a spotless hind;
And check her sweet voice, that no sound
Unhallow'd might the rites confound.

EPOD. Rent on the earth her maiden veil she throws*,

either to appease the anger of Diana, and purchase a favourable wind by the blood of his daughter, or to see this great armament of united Greece, her heroes, and her glory, unprofitably wasted at Aulis: yet even the Chorus here, though under the influence of the strongest religious impressions, instead of extolling the hero for suffering the patriot passions to prevail over private affection, censure the deed, though acknowledged to be necessary, as audacious, mad, and unholy. But we shall see that the poet knew what he was about.

* The behaviour of Iphigenia is described with inimitable beauty: there is an eloquence in her actions, in her eyes, in her attitude, beyond the power of words. As she had been admitted to her father's feasts, and accustomed to entertain him with her songs, she presumed on his fondness, and throwing off her maiden veil, (as its colour signifies), stood in the act to speak to him; but

That emulates the rose;
And on the sad attendants rolling
The trembling lustre of her dewy eyes,
Their grief-impassion'd souls controlling,
That ennobled, modest grace,
Which the mimic pencil tries
In the imag'd form to trace,
The breathing picture shows:
And as, amidst his festal pleasures,
Her father oft rejoic'd to hear
Her voice in soft mellifluous measures
Warble the sprightly-fancied air;
So now in act to speak the virgin stands:
But when, the third libation paid,
She heard her father's dread commands
Injoining silence, she obey'd:
And for her country's good,
With patient, meek, submissive mind
To her hard fate resign'd,
Pour'd out the rich stream of her blood.

What since hath past I know not, nor relate*;
But never did the prophet speak in vain,
Th' afflicted, anxious for his future fate,
Looks forward, and with hope relieves his pain.
But since th' inevitable ill will come,
Much knowledge to much misery is allied;

hearing his voice commanding silence, she obeyed with meek submission. This is the painting of a great master.

* The Chorus observes a judicious silence with regard to what ensued: we hope however again to introduce this unfortunate and amiable lady to the acquaintance of the English reader. The remaining part of the ode contains only a melancholy reflection, introduced with great propriety, as a gloomy presage of the catastrophe; even the concluding prayer for the welfare of Greece has the same turn.

Why strive we then t' anticipate the doom,
Which happiness and wisdom wish to hide?

Yet let this careful, age-enfeebled band
Breathe from our inmost soul one ardent vow,
Now the sole guardians of this Apian land,
"May fair success with glory bind her brow!"

CLYTEMNESTRA, CHORUS.

CHOR. With reverence, Clytemnestra, I approach
Thy greatness; honour due to her that fills
The royal seat, yet vacant of its lord.
If ought of glad import hath reach'd thy ear,
Or to fair hope the victim bleeds *, I wish,
But with submission to thy will, to hear.

CLYT. The joy-importing morn springs, as they say,
From night, her mother. Thou shalt hear a joy
Beyond thy hopes to hear: The town of Priam
Is fall'n beneath the conquering arms of Greece.

CHOR. What said'st thou? Passing credence fled thy word.

CLYT. In Troy Greece triumphs. Speak I clearly now?

CHOR. Joy steals upon me, and calls forth the tear.

CLYT. Thy glist'ning eye bespeaks an honest heart.

CHOR. Does ought of certain proof confirm these tidings?

CLYT. It does: Why not? unless the Gods deceive us.

CHOR. Perchance the visions of persuasive dreams.

CLYT. Sport of the slumb'ring soul; they move not me.

CHOR. Hath then some winged rumour spread these transports?

CLYT. As a raw girl's, thou hold'st my judgment cheap.

CHOR. How long hath ruin crush'd this haughty city?

CLYT. This night, that gave this infant morning birth.

* On hearing good tidings, even though the report was uncertain, it was usual to sacrifice to good hope, εὐαγγέλοισιν ἐλπίσιν—STANLEY—and to send a share of the victims to their friends.—See p. 12. l. 13.

CHOR. What speed cou'd be the herald of this news?
CLYT. The fire, that from the height of Ida sent
Its streaming light, as from th' announcing flame
Torch blaz'd to torch. First Ida to the steep
Of Lemnos; Athos' sacred height receiv'd
The mighty splendor; from the surging back
Of th' Hellespont the vig'rous blaze held on
Its smiling way, and like the orient sun
Illumes with golden-gleaming rays the head
Of rocky Macetas; nor lingers there,
Nor winks unheedful, but its warning flames
Darts to the streams of Euripus, and gives
Its glitt'ring signal to the guards that hold
Their high watch on Mesapius. These enkindle
The joy-denouncing fires, that spread the blaze
To where Erica hoar its shaggy brow
Waves rudely. Unimpair'd the active flame
Bounds o'er the level of Asopus, like
The jocund Moon, and on Cithæron's steep
Wakes a successive flame; the distant watch
Agnize its shine, and raise a brighter fire,
That o'er the lake Gorgopis streaming holds
Its rapid course, and on the mountainous heights
Of Ægiplanctus huge, swift-shooting spreads
The lengthen'd line of light. Thence onwards waves
Its fiery tresses, eager to ascend
The crags of Prone, frowning in their pride
O'er the Saronic gulf: it leaps, it mounts
The summit of Arachne, whose high head
Looks down on Argos: to this royal seat
Thence darts the light that from th' Idæan fire
Derives its birth. Rightly in order thus
Each to the next consigns the torch, that fills
The bright succession, whilst the first in speed

Vies with the last: the promis'd signal this
Giv'n by my lord t' announce the fall of Troy.

CHOR. Anon my grateful praise shall rise to Heav'n:
Now, lady, wou'd I willingly attend
Thro' each glad circumstance the wond'rous tale.

CLYT. This day the conquering Greeks are lords of Troy.
Methinks I hear the various clamours rise
Discordant through the city. Pour thou oil
In the same vase and vinegar, in vain
Wou'dst thou persuade th' unsocial streams to mix:
The captives' and the conqueror's voice distinct,
Marks of their different fortune, may'st thou hear:
Those rolling on the bodies of the slain,
Friends, husbands, brothers, fathers; the weak arms
Of children clasp'd around the bleeding limbs
Of hoary age, lament their fall, their necks
Bent to the yoke of slavery: Eager these
From the fierce toils of war, who thro' the gloom
Of night rang'd wide, fly on the spoils, as chance
Not order, leads them; in the Trojan houses,
Won by their spears, they walk at large, reliev'd
From the cold dews dropt from th' unshelter'd sky;
And at th' approach of eve, like those whose pow'r
Commands security, the easy night
Shall sleep unguarded. If with hallow'd rites
They venerate the Gods that o'er the city *,

* It was observed in the preface to this tragedy, that the character of Clytemnestra is that of an high-spirited, close, determined, dangerous woman; this character now begins to unfold itself. She had with deep premeditation planned the murder of her husband; he was now returning; her soul of course must at this time be full of her horrid design, and all her thoughts intent upon the execution of it: we have in the remaining part of this speech a strong proof of this; she is dark, sententious, and even religious; so the Chorus understands her words, and so she intends they should; but the very expressions, by which she wishes to conceal, and does conceal her purpose

With those that o'er the vanquish'd country rule,
And reverence their shrines, the conquering troops
Shall not be conquer'd. May no base desire,
No guilty wish urge them, enthrall'd to gain,
To break thro' sacred laws. Behoves them now,
With safety in their train, backward to plough
The refluent wave. Shou'd they return expos'd
To th' anger of the Gods, vengeance wou'd wake
To seize its prey, might they perchance escape
Life's incidental ills. From me thou hearest
A woman's sentiment; and much I wish,
Their glories by no rude mischance depress'd,
To cull from many blessings the most precious.

CHOR. With manly sentiment thy wisdom, lady,
Speaks well. Confiding in thy suasive signs,
Prepare we to address the Gods; our strains
Shall not without their meed of honour rise.

PROS. Supreme of kings *, Jove; and thou, friendly night,
That wide o'er Heav'n's star-spangled plain
Holdest thy awful reign,
Thou, that with resistless might
O'er Troy's proud tow'rs, and destin'd state,
Hast thrown the secret net of fate,
In whose enormous sweep the young, the old,
Without distinction roll'd,
Are with unsparing fury dragg'd away
To slavery and woe a prey:
Thee, hospitable Jove, whose vengeful pow'r

from the Argive senators, by being ambiguous, and comprehending a double meaning, so far mark the working of her mind, as to give us an hint of what is revolving there.

* This ode, as the last, begins with a sublime and manly address to Jupiter, acknowledging his power, and the certainty of his judgments on the impious, though deferred for a season.

These terrors o'er the foe has spread,
Thy bow long bent at Paris' head,
Whose arrows know their time to fly,
Not hurtling aimless in the sky,
Our pious strains adore.

STRO. 1. The hand of Jove will they not own *;
And, as his marks they trace,
Confess he will'd, and it was done?
Who now of earth-born race
Shall dare contend that his high pow'r
Deigns not with eye severe to view
The wretch, that tramples on his law?
Hence with this impious lore:
Learn that the sons accurs'd shall rue
The madly daring father's pride,
That furious drew th' unrighteous sword,
High in his house the rich spoils stor'd,
And the avenging Gods defied.
But be it mine to draw
From wisdom's fount, pure as it flows,
That calm of soul, which virtue only knows.
For vain the shield, that wealth shall spread,
To guard the proud oppressor's head,
Who dares the rites of Justice to confound,
And spurn her altars to the ground.

ANTIS. 1. But suasive is the voice of vice †,

* These judgments had fallen in so conspicuous a manner on guilty Troy, that it was impossible not to see the immediate hand of the God, and to own that no might, no riches can protect the impious from his just vengeance.

† Yet vice has its assuasive charms; but the remedy is not entirely concealed, as the mischief glares through her disguise; and as adulterate brass is discovered by a proper trial, so is it with the wicked, who pursues his wanton sports to the destruction of his country; considering the subject, the allusion to a boy pursuing a bird has a singular propriety and beauty; here the great moral recurs again, that vice shall not be unpunished; and the whole

That spreads th' insidious snare:
She, not conceal'd, thro' her disguise
Emits a livid glare.
Her vot'ry, like adult'rate brass
Unfaithful to its use, unsound,
Proves the dark baseness of his soul;
Fond as a boy to chase
The winged bird light-flitting round,
And bent on his pernicious play
Draws desolation on his state.
His vows no God regards, when Fate
In vengeance sweeps the wretch away.
With base intent and foul,
Each hospitable law defied,
From Sparta's king thus Paris stole his bride.
To Greece she left the shield, the spear,
The naval armament of war;
And, bold in ill, to Troy's devoted shore
Destruction for her dow'ry bore.

STRO. 2. When thro' the gates her easy way*

is applied to Paris, who, in violation of the sacred rights of hospitality, bore away the wife of Menelaus. There are few passages in Æschylus more obscure than this antistrophe; the translator has applied all his attention to it, but presumes not to say how far he has succeeded. The same critic, who before sent us to Aulis for a sparrow's nest, has here discovered the firebrand of Hecuba, the prophecy of Cassandra, and the improvident care of the mother to preserve her son: but this surely is all a dream.

* We are now prepared for an account of the departure of Helena with Paris: the dismay of the Spartan seers, the affliction of the husband fixed in silent grief on the picture of his inconstant wife, then turning from it with a bursting sigh, and his dreams, that present her to his imagination in all her attractive charms, then vanish and leave him in despair, are finely imaged; so the grief, which arose first in the house of Menelaus, and thence spread its gloom over all Greece, is well conceived, and tends to carry on the poet's general design, which was to represent the dreadful consequences of this fatal war.

She took, his pensive breast
Each prophet smote in deep dismay,
And thus his grief exprest,
" What woes this royal mansion threat,
" This mansion, and its mighty lord?
" Where now the chaste connubial bed?
" The traces of her feet,
" By love to her blest consort led,
" Where now? Ah, silent, see, she stands;
" Each glowing tint, each radiant grace,
" That charm th' enraptur'd eye, we trace;
" And still the blooming form commands,
" Still honour'd, still ador'd,
" Tho' careless of her former loves
" Far o'er the rolling sea the wanton roves:
" The husband, with a bursting sigh,
" Turns from the pictur'd fair his eye;
" Whilst love, by absence fed, without control
" Tumultuous rushes on his soul.
ANTIS. 2. " Oft as short slumbers close his eyes,
" His sad soul sooth'd to rest,
" The dream-created visions rise,
" With all her charms imprest:
" But vain th' ideal scene, that smiles
" With rapt'rous love and warm delight;
Vain his fond hopes: his eager arms
" The fleeting form beguiles,
" On sleep's quick pinions passing light."
Such griefs, and more severe than these,
Their sad gloom o'er the palace spread;
Thence stretch their melancholy shade,
And darken o'er the realms of Greece.
Struck with no false alarms

Each house its home-felt sorrow knows *,
Each bleeding heart is pierc'd with keenest woes;
When for the hero, sent to share
The glories of the crimson war,
Nought, save his arms stain'd with their master's gore,
And his cold ashes reach the shore.

STRO. 3. Thus in the dire exchange of war
Does Mars the balance hold;
Helms are the scales, the beam a spear,
And blood is weigh'd for gold.
Thus, for the warrior, to his friends
His sad remains, a poor return,
Sav'd from the sullen fire that rose
On Troy's curst shore, he sends,
Plac'd decent in the mournful urn.
With many a tear their dead they weep,

* Paris had been guilty of the most atrocious act of injustice to Menelaus; all Greece had united to revenge the affront, and had chosen Agamemnon as the commander in chief of this mighty armament; he had carried on a great and dangerous war for ten years; was brave, wise, and just, had subverted the empire of Priam, and raised the military fame of his country to the highest glory; was now returning crowned with conquest, and enriched with spoils, the most illustrious of mortal men: might we not then expect that his faithful senators, who loved and honoured him, should have celebrated the victories of their king, and welcomed his return to Argos with pæans of joy? Instead of this, they dwell on the miseries of the war, the unhappiness of families which, instead of their lords, had received back only their arms stained with their blood, or urns containing their ashes, the murmurs of the people, and the severe retaliation demanded for blood, even though shed in a just war: in short, all their ideas, and even their moral reflections, are gloomy and of ill presage. But the great poet knew what he was about: the character of the Chorus was sacred, their claim of inspiration had rendered it prophetic, they were not therefore to be dazzled with the vain splendor of triumphs immediately before them; but their minds were carried forward to future events, and there every presage was dark and melancholy; and by this judicious conduct we are further prepared for the catastrophe.

Their names with many a praise resound;
One for his skill in arms renown'd;
One, that amidst the slaughter'd heap
Of fierce-conflicting foes
Glorious in beauty's cause he fell:
Yet 'gainst th' avenging chiefs their murmurs swell
In silence. Some in youth's fresh bloom
Beneath Troy's tow'rs possess a tomb;
Their bodies buried on the distant strand,
Seizing in death the hostile land.

ANTIS. 3. How dreadful, when the people raise
Loud murmurs mix'd with hate!
Yet this the tribute greatness pays
For its exalted state.
E'en now some dark and horrid deed
By my presaging soul is fear'd;
For never with unheedful eyes,
When slaughter'd thousands bleed,
Did the just power's of Heav'n regard
The carnage of th' ensanguin'd plain.
The ruthless and oppressive pow'r
May triumph for its little hour;
Full soon with all their vengeful train
The sullen Furies rise,
Break his fell force, and whirl him down
Thro' life's dark path, unpitied, and unknown.
And dangerous is the pride of fame,—
Like the red light'nings dazzling flame.
Nor envied wealth, nor conquest let me gain,
Nor drag the conqueror's hateful chain.

EPOD. But from these fires far streaming thro' the night
Fame thro' the town her progress takes,
And rapt'rous joy awakes;
If with truth's auspicious light

They shine, who knows? Her sacred reign
Nor fraud, nor falsehood dares profane.
But who, in wisdom's school so lightly taught,
Suffers his ardent thought
From these informing flames to catch the fire,
Full soon perchance in grief t' expire?
Yet when a woman holds the sovereign sway,
Obsequious wisdom learns to bow,
And hails the joy it does not know;
Tho', as the glitt'ring visions roll
Before her easy, credulous soul,
Their glories fade away.

CLYT. Whether these fires, that with successive signals
Blaze thro' the night, be true, or like a dream
Play with a sweet delusion on the soul,
Soon shall we know. An herald from the shore
I see; branches of olive shade his brows.
That cloud of dust, rais'd by his speed, assures me
That neither speechless, nor enkindling flames
Along the mountains, will he signify
His message; but his tongue shall greet our ears
With words of joy: far from my soul the thought
Of other, than confirm these fav'ring signals.

CHOR. May he, that to this state shall form a wish
Of other aim, on his own head receive it.

CLYTEMNESTRA, CHORUS, HERALD.

HER. Hail, thou paternal soil of Argive earth!
In the fair light of the tenth year to thee
Return'd, from the sad wreck of many hopes
This one I save; sav'd from despair e'en this;
For never thought I in this honour'd earth
To share in death the portion of a tomb.
Hail then, lov'd earth; hail, thou bright sun; and thou,

Great guardian of my country, supreme Jove;
Thou, Pythian king, thy shafts no longer wing'd
For our destruction *; on Scamander's banks
Enough we mourn'd thy wrath; propitious now
Come, king Apollo, our defence. And all
Ye Gods, that o'er the works of war preside,
I now invoke; thee, Mercury †, my avenger,
Rever'd by heralds, that from thee derive
Their high employ; you heroes ‡, to the war
That sent us, friendly now receive our troops,
The relics of the spear. Imperial walls,
Mansion of kings, ye seats rever'd; ye Gods,
That to the golden sun before these gates
Present your honour'd forms; if e'er of old
Those eyes with favour have beheld the king,
Receive him now, after this length of time,

* This alludes to the pestilence in the Grecian camp, by Homer, ascribed to Apollo as a punishment for the affront offered to his priest Chryses:

Thus Chryses pray'd: the fav'ring pow'r attends,
And from Olympus' lofty tops descends.
Bent was his bow the Grecian hearts to wound;
Fierce as he mov'd, his silver shafts resound.
Breathing revenge a sudden night he spread,
And gloomy darkness roll'd around his head.
The fleet in view he twang'd his deadly bow,
And hissing fly the feather'd fates below, &c.—Pope.

† Mercury, as the messenger of the Gods, was esteemed the patron of heralds, whose character therefore was always held sacred.

‡ The Grecians, in their solemn invocations of the Gods, paid this reverence to the names of their heroes, supposing them still to be the protectors of their country. Thus Xenophon represents Cyrus, when marching into the territories of the enemy, before he passed the line of division, to have sacrificed to Jupiter, and the other Gods, and, at the same time, to have invoked the heroes, the dwellers and guardians of Media; and after he had passed, to have again sacrificed to the Gods, and propitiated the heroes guardians of Assyria.—Xen. Cyn.

With glory; for he comes, and with him brings
To you, and all, a light that cheers this gloom:
Then greet him well; such honour is his meed,
The mighty king, that with the mace of Jove
Th' avenger, wherewith he subdues the earth,
Hath levell'd with the dust the tow'rs of Troy;
Their altars are o'erturn'd, their sacred shrines,
And all the race destroy'd. This iron yoke
Fix'd on the neck of Troy, victorious comes
The great Atrides, of all mortal men
Worthy of highest honours. Paris now,
And the perfidious state, shall boast no more
His proud deeds unreveng'd: stript of his spoils,
The debt of justice for his thefts, his rapines,
Paid amply, o'er his father's house he spreads
With twofold loss the wide-involving ruin *.

CLYT. Joy to thee, herald of the Argive host †.

* He not only lost Helena, whom he had carried away, and the treasures brought with her, but had involved his country in ruin.

† Mr. Heath attributes to the Chorus the part here assigned to Clytemnestra. He thinks it unbecoming the dignity of the queen, and that the Herald answers too familiarly: this mistake led him into many others. The Herald's message was directly to the queen; and as he bore a sacred character, her dignity did not suffer by the conference; neither is there any thing of disrespectful familiarity on his part: ancient manners permitted not the Chorus to interrupt the queen. The fifth line of p. 48 is an evasive answer: this artful woman wished to appear to the Herald, and by him to be represented as having suffered much during her husband's absence; being asked, By whom? She replies with an affective caution, That silence had been her best remedy. What seems to have misled this learned critic, was his opinion that the Chorus hinted at the infamous commerce between Clytemnestra and Ægisthens; but the words on which he first founds his opinion, v. 555 of the original, have a very different meaning: the herald says, You desire to see those, who have as great a desire to see this country; she answers

Such, that I oft' have breath'd the secret sigh.

Mr. Heath derives another proof from the word κλύοντας, v. 589, which

HER. For joy like this, death were a cheap exchange.
CLYT. Strong thy affection to thy native soil.
HER. So strong, the tear of joy starts from my eye.
CLYT. What, hath this sweet infection reach'd e'en you?
HER. Beyond the pow'r of language have I felt it.
CLYT. The fond desire of those, whose equal love—
HER. This of the army say'st thou, whose warm love
Streams to this land? Is this thy fond desire?
CLYT. Such, that I oft' have breath'd the secret sigh.
HER. Whence did the army cause this anxious sadness?
CLYT. Silence I long have held an healing balm.
HER. The princes absent, had'st thou whom to fear?
CLYT. To use thy words, death were a wish'd exchange.
HER. Well is the conflict ended. In the tide
Of so long time, if 'midst the easy flow
Of wish'd events some tyrannous blast assail us,
What marvel? Who, save the blest Gods, can claim
Thro' life's whole course an unmix'd happiness?
Shou'd I relate our toils, our wretched plight

being masculine and plural, shows that the Herald had been addressing not Clytemnestra, but the Chorus: it rather shows, that this part of his discourse had been addressed both to Clytemnestra and the Chorus; had he spoke to the Chorus only, he would have used the singular number, as he does twice afterwards, when the queen had left them,

Ἐκύρσας, ὥ-ε τοξότης ἄκρος, σκοπού.—v. 637.
Τοσαῦτ' ἀκούσας, ἴσθι ταληθῆ κλύων.—v. 689.

Nor is his critique on νικώμενος, translated "I am convinced," better founded; for this is a modest apology for their distrust of Clytemnestra's news, expressed in the last epode; to which she replies sarcastically, p. 51. l. 7. Mr. Heath finishes, by interpreting the 4th and 5th lines of p. 53, as if the Chorus insinuated that Clytemnestra had spoke with artful dissimulation what she wished the Herald should relate to the king; and thereby hinted at her infidelity: but the words of the original are clear and express, and incapable of admitting any other sense than what the translation presents. Indeed nothing could be more unhappily conceived than the opinion of these intimations from the Chorus, as it is repugnant to the whole plan and conduct of the play.

Wedg'd in our narrow ill-provided cabins,
Each irksome hour was loaded with fatigues.
Yet these were slight assays to those worse hardships
We suffer'd on the shore: our lodging near
The walls of the enemy, the dews of Heav'n
Fell on us from above, the damps beneath
From the moist marsh annoy'd us, shrouded ill
In shaggy cov'rings *. Or shou'd one relate
The winter's keen blasts, which from Ida's snows
Breathe frore, that pierc'd thro' all their plumes the birds
Shiver and die; or th' extreme heat that scalds,
When in his mid-day caves the sea reclines,
And not a breeze disturbs his calm repose.
But why lament these sufferings? They are past;
Past to the dead indeed; they lie, no more
Anxious to rise. What then avails to count
Those, whom the wasteful war hath swept away,
And with their loss afflict the living? Rather
Bid we farewel to misery: in our scale,
Who haply of the Grecian host remain,
The good preponderates, and in counterpoise
Our loss is light; and, after all our toils
By sea and land, before yon golden sun
It is our glorious privilege to boast,
" At length from vanquish'd Troy our warlike troops
" Have to the Gods of Greece brought home these spoils,
" And in their Temples, to record our conquests,
" Fix'd these proud trophies." Those, that hear this boast,

* If the reader is not satisfied with Pauw's interpretation of this passage, nor with the translator's, Mr. Heath is at hand, who renders it thus, " The " dews wet us, the certain destruction of our garments, making our hair like " the shag of wild beasts." One would imagine that this learned person had Nebuchadnezzar in his thoughts, but that the hairs of the Assyrian monarch were grown like eagles' feathers. If by ἔνδηρον τεῖχα we understand the shaggy coverings of the tents, we shall find it a good military idea.

It well becomes to gratulate the state,
And the brave chiefs; revering Jove's high pow'r
That grac'd our conquering arms. Thou hast my message.

CHOR. Thy words convince me; all my doubts are vanish'd:
But scrupulous inquiry grows with age.
On Clytemnestra and her house this charge,
Blessing e'en me with the rich joy, devolves.

CLYT. Long since my voice rais'd high each note of joy,
When thro' the night the streaming blaze first came,
And told us Troy was taken: Not unblam'd
That, as a woman lightly credulous,
I let a mountain fire transport my soul
With the fond hope that Ilion's haughty tow'rs
Were humbled in the dust. At this rebuke
Tho' somewhat shaken, yet I sacrific'd;
And, as weak women wont, one voice of joy
Awoke another, till the city rang
Thro' all its streets; and at the hallow'd shrines
Each rais'd the pious strains of gratitude,
And fann'd the altars' incense-breathing flame.
But it is needless to detain thee longer,
Soon from the king's own lips shall I learn all.
How best I may receive my honour'd lord,
And grace his wish'd return, now claims my speed.
Can Heav'n's fair beam shew a fond wife a sight
More grateful than her husband from his wars
Return'd with glory, when she opes the gate,
And springs to welcome him? Tell my lord this,
That he may hasten his desir'd return:
And tell him he will find his faithful wife,
Such as he left her, a domestic creature
To him all fondness, to his enemies
Irreconcileable; and tell him too
That ten long years have not effac'd the seal

Of Constancy; that never knew I pleasure
In the blamed converse of another man,
More than the virgin metal in the mines *
Knows an adulterate and debasing mixture.

HER. This high boast, lady, sanctified by truth,
Is not unseemly in thy princely rank.

HERALD, CHORUS.

CHOR. This, for thy information, hath she spoken
With dignity and truth. Now tell me, herald,
Of Sparta's king wish I to question thee,
The pride of Greece: returns he safe with you?

HER. Never can I esteem a falsehood honest,
Tho' my friends long enjoy the sweet delusion.

CHOR. What then if thou relate an honest truth?
From this distinction the conjecture's easy.

HER. Him from the Grecian fleet our eyes have lost,
The hero and his ship. This is the truth.

CHOR. Chanc'd this, when in your sight he weigh'd from Troy;
Or in a storm, that rent him from the fleet?

HER. Rightly is thy conjecture aim'd, in brief
Touching the long recital of our loss.

CHOR. How deem'd the other mariners of this;
That the ship perish'd, or rode out the storm?

HER. Who, save yon' sun the regent of the earth,
Can give a clear and certain information?

* Of this passage Pauw honestly says, aliquid subest quod ego non intelligo. Mr. Heath disapproves the allusion, though he thinks it a proverbial expression, the grace of which is lost upon our ignorance, and says, quod nos non videmus alius forsan olim videbit. In the mean time, the translator had only one part to take, which was to supply what he thought the expression wanted to render it intelligible; a part, which all the interpreters of Æschylus must take, reduits souvent à deviner, on les voit hesiter, et chercher à rendre le sens quand ils ne peuvent se former une idée exacte des mots.

CHOR. How said'st thou then a storm, not without loss,
Wing'd with Heav'n's fury, tost the shatter'd fleet.
HER. It is not meet, with inauspicious tongue*
Spreading ill tidings, to profane a day
Sacred to festal joy: the Gods require
Their pure rites undisturbed. When with a brow
Witness of woe, the messenger relates
Unwelcome news, defeats, and slaughter'd armies,
The wound with general grief affects the state;
And with particular and private sorrow
Full many an house, for many that have fall'n
Victims to Mars, who to his bloody car
Delights to yoke his terrors, sword and spear.
A pæan to the Furies wou'd become
The bearer of such pond'rous heap of ills.
My tidings are of conquest and success
Diffusing joy: with these glad sounds how mix
Distress, and speak of storms, and angry Gods?—
The pow'rs, before most hostile, now conspir'd,
Fire and the sea, in ruin reconcil'd:
And in a night of tempest wild from Thrace
In all their fury rush'd the howling winds;
Tost by the forceful blasts ship against ship
In hideous conflict dash'd, or disappear'd,
Driv'n at the boist'rous whirlwind's dreadful will.
But when the sun's fair light return'd, we see
Bodies of Grecians, and the wreck of ships
Float on the chaf'd foam of th' Ægean sea.
Us and our ship some God, the pow'r of man

* Ancient superstition required that the festal days, instituted to the honour of the Gods for any success, should not be contaminated with any inauspicious word, much less with the relation of any unfortunate event: Æschylus here assigns the reason: hence the εὐφημεῖν of the Greeks, and the favere linguis of the Latins.—STANLEY.

Were all too weak, holding the helm preserv'd
Unhurt, or interceding for our safety;
And Fortune the deliverer steer'd our course
To shun the waves, that near the harbour's mouth
Boil high, or break upon the rocky shore.
Escap'd th' ingulfing sea, yet scarce secure
Of our escape, thro' the fair day we view
With sighs the recent sufferings of the host,
Cov'ring the sea with wrecks. If any breathe
This vital air, they deem us lost*, as we
Think the same ruin theirs. Fair fall th' event!
But first and chief expect the Spartan king
T' arrive; if yet one ray of yon' bright sun

* Pauw censures the poet here as inconsistent, the Herald having before declared it improper to profane a day sacred to festal joy with ill tidings: Mr. Heath defends him, by saying the tidings are rather of good than of ill: but this is directly contrary to the Herald's words, who speaks of tempests, wrecks, bodies floating on the waves, and the anger of the Gods, as ills; and such to common understandings they must appear: indeed he seems apprehensive of this, yet thinks them very proper, as these unfortunate circumstances give a presage of the impending death of Agamemnon; at the same time they give it an air of probability, by rendering the king more obnoxious to the treacheries of Clytemnestra, as being returned with one single ship, without his friends and the army. Thus Mr. Heath; but it appears by the barbarous boast of Clytemnestra, after she had perpetrated the horrid deed, that she had planned it in such a manner, at such a time, and in such a place, that the execution of it could not be prevented. The poet had a deeper design: though the dramatic unities had not their name in his time, yet they owe their existence to him, and he was as sensible, as any of his critics can be, of the impropriety of making Agamemnon appear at Argos the day after Troy was taken; yet his plan required this, and it is so finely executed, that he must be a critic minorum gentium who objects to it. The whole narration of the Herald is calculated to soften this impropriety; a tempest separates the royal ship from the fleet, some God preserves it, and Fortune, the deliverer, guides it into the harbour; every thing is as rapid and impetuous as the genius of Æschylus, and the expression is so carefully guarded, that no hint is given of the vessel's being at sea more than one night: there are some subsequent expressions of the same tendency.

Beholds him living, thro' the care of Jove,
Who wills not to destroy that royal race,
Well may we hope to joy in his return.
Having heard this, know thou hast heard the truth.

CHORUS.

STRO. 1. Is there to names a charm profound *
Expressive of their fates assign'd,
Mysterious potency of sound,
And truth in wond'rous accord join'd?
Why else this fatal name,
That Helen and destruction are the same †?
Affianc'd in contention, led,
The spear her dow'ry, to the bridal bed;
With desolation in her train,
Fatal to martial hosts, to rampir'd tow'rs,
From the rich fragrance of her gorgeous bow'rs,
Descending to the main,
She hastes to spread her flying sails,
And calls the earth-born zephyr's gales.
Whilst heroes, breathing vengeance, snatch their shields,
And trace her light oars o'er the pathless waves,

* The general design of this beautiful ode is so clear, that it wants no elucidation: the sober and religious moral, that breathes through the richest description and most vivid colouring, gives it the highest grace and the utmost perfection to which poetry can aspire.

† This is one of those passages where un tour vaut une pensée, et en est veritablement une: this grace, such as it is, vanishes the moment you attempt to transfuse it into another language.

Helena, in allusion to her name, is here called Helenas, Helandros, Heleptolis, the destroyer of ships, the destroyer of men, the destroyer of cities: a translator in such a case can only catch the general idea, if he retains the particular one, the fallen star becomes only a cold jelly: happily he had here an opportunity of availing himself of the general superstition of the ancients with regard to names; the philosophy of which opinion no Pythagorean nor Stoic, though both schools devoutly taught it, explained with better argument than the father of Tristram Shandy.

To the thick shades fresh waving o'er those fields,
Which Simois with his silver windings laves.

ANTIS. 1. To Troy the shining mischief came,
Before her young-ey'd pleasures play;
But in the rear with stedfast aim
Grim visag'd vengeance marks his prey,
Waiting the dreadful hour
The terrors of offended Heav'n to pour
On those that dar'd, an impious train,
The rights of hospitable Jove profane;
Nor rever'd that sacred song,
Whose melting strains the bride's approach declare,
As Hymen wakes the rapture-breathing air,
Far other notes belong,
The voice of mirth now heard no more,
To Priam's state: its ruins o'er
Wailing instead, distress, and loud lament;
Long sorrows sprung from that unholy bed,
And many a curse in heart-felt anguish sent
On its woe-wedded Paris' hated head.

STRO. 2. The woodman, from his thirsty lair,
Reft of his dam, a lion bore;
Foster'd his future foe with care
To mischiefs he must soon deplore:
Gentle and tame, whilst young,
Harmless he frisk'd the fondling babes among;
Oft' in the father's bosom lay,
Oft' lick'd his feeding hand in fawning play;
Till, conscious of his firmer age,
His lion-race the lordly savage shows;
No more his youth-protecting cottage knows,
But with insatiate rage
Flies on the flocks, a baleful guest,
And riots in th' unbidden feast:

Whilst thro' his mangled folds the hapless swain
With horror sees th' unbounded carnage spread;
And learns too late from th' infernal reign
A priest of Ate in his house was bred.

ANTIS. 2. To Ilion's tow'rs in wanton state
With speed she wings her easy way;
Soft gales obedient round her wait,
And pant on the delighted sea.
Attendant on her side
The richest ornaments of splendid pride:
The darts, whose golden points inspire,
Shot from her eyes, the flames of soft desire;
The youthful bloom of rosy love,
That fills with extasy the willing soul;
With duteous zeal obey her sweet control.
But, such the doom of Jove,
Vindictive round her nuptial bed,
With threat'ning mein and footstep dread,
Rushes, to Priam and his state severe,
To rend the bleeding heart his stern delight,
And from the bridal eye to force the tear,
Erinnys, rising from the realms of night.

EPOD. From ev'ry mouth we oft' have heard
This saying, for its age rever'd;
" With joy we see our offspring rise,
" And happy, who not childless dies:
" But fortune, when her flow'rets blow,
" Oft' bears the bitter fruit of woe."
Tho' these saws are as truths allow'd,
Thus I dare differ from the croud,
" One base deed, with prolific pow'r,
" Like its curst stock engenders more:
" But to the just, with blooming grace
" Still flourishes, a beauteous race."

The old injustice joys to breed
Her young, instinct with villainous deed;
The young her destin'd hour will find
To rush in mischief on mankind:
She too in Ate's murky cell,
Brings forth the hideous child of hell,
A burden to th' offended sky,
The pow'r of bold impiety.

But Justice bids her ray divine
E'en on the low-roof'd cottage shine;
And beams her glories on the life,
That knows not fraud, nor ruffian strife.
The gorgeous glare of gold, obtain'd
By foul polluted hands, disdain'd
She leaves, and with averted eyes
To humbler, holier mansions flies;
And looking thro' the times to come
Assigns each deed its righteous doom.

CHORUS, AGAMEMNON.

CHOR. My royal lord, by whose victorious hand
The tow'rs of Troy are fall'n, illustrious son
Of Atreus, with what words, what reverence
Shall I address thee, not t' o'erleap the bounds
Of modest duty, nor to sink beneath
An honourable welcome? Some there are,
That form themselves to seem, more than to be,
Transgressing honesty: to him that feels
Misfortune's rugg'd hand, full many a tongue
Shall drop condolence, tho' th' unfeeling heart
Knows not the touch of sorrow; these again
In fortune's summer gale with the like art
Shall dress in forc'd smiles th' unwilling face:

But him the penetrating eye soon marks,
That in the seemly garb of honest zeal
Attempts to clothe his meager blandishments.
When first in Helen's cause my royal lord
Levied his host, let me not hide the truth,
Notes, other than of music, echoed wide
In loud complaints from such as deem'd him rash,
And void of reason, by constraint to plant
In breasts averse the martial soul, that glows
Despising death. But now their eager zeal
Streams friendly to those chiefs, whose prosp'rous valour
Is crown'd with conquest. Soon then shalt thou learn,
As each supports the state, or strives to rend it
With faction, who reveres thy dignity.

AGAM. To Argos first, and to my country Gods *,
I bow with reverence, by whose holy guidance
On Troy's proud tow'rs I pour'd their righteous vengeance,
And now revisit safe my native soil.
No loud-tongued pleader heard, they judg'd the cause,
And in the bloody urn †, without one vote
Dissentient, cast the lots that fix'd the fate
Of Ilion and its sons: the other vase
Left empty, save of widow'd hope. The smoke,
Rolling in dusky wreaths, shows that the town

* Nothing shows the good sense and fine taste of the Athenians more, than their regard to religious sentiments, even in their public spectacles. Tragedy was not yet allowed to lose sight of reverence to the Gods, the love of liberty, and affection to their country, principles the most necessary to be inculcated on the people. Agamemnon could not return the gratulations of his faithful senators, till he had addressed his paternal land, and its Gods, who had led him to this war, and brought him back in safety. Such sentiments would reflect honour on more enlightened ages.

† The English reader will find the whole process of the ancient courts of judicature, the loud-tongued pleaders, and the urns or vases of acquittal or condemnation, in the Furies: the vase, into which the shells of condemnation are put, is here finely called "the bloody urn, αἱματηρὸν τεῦχος."

Is fall'n; the fiery storm yet lives, and high
The dying ashes toss rich clouds of wealth
Consum'd. For this behoves us to the Gods
Render our grateful thanks, and that they spread
The net of fate sweeping with angry ruin.
In beauty's cause the Argive monster rear'd *
Its bulk enormous, to th' affrighted town
Portending devastation; in its womb
Hiding embattled hosts, rush'd furious forth,
About the setting of the Pleiades,
And, as a lion rav'ning for its prey,
Ramp'd o'er their walls, and lapp'd the blood of kings.
This to the Gods address'd, I turn me now
Attentive to thy caution: I approve
Thy just remark, and with my voice confirm it.
Few have the fortitude of soul to honour
A friend's success, without a touch of envy;
For that malignant passion to the heart
Cleaves close, and with a double burden loads
The man infected with it: first he feels
In all their weight his own calamities,
Then sighs to see the happiness of others.

* Virgil knew how to make a fine use of this noble imagery.

Scandit fatalis machina muros
Fœta armis.—
Illa subit, mediæque minans illabitur urbi.—
quater ipso in limite portæ
Substitit, atque utero sonitum quater arma dedere.
Instamus tamen immemores, cæcique furore,
Et monstrum infelix sacratâ sistimus arce.

We have nothing in our language more greatly conceived, or more finely expressed, than the first part of the Ode to Fear by Mr. Collins; it is in the genuine spirit of Æschylus; the last line is manifestly taken from hence,

Ἄδην ἕλειξεν αἵματος τυραννικοῦ.
On whom that ravening brood of fate,
Who lap the blood of sorrow, wait.

This of my own experience have I learn'd;
And this I know, that many, who in public
Have born the semblance of my firmest friends,
Are but the flatt'ring image of a shadow
Reflected from a mirror: Save Ulysses,
Alone, who, tho' averse to join our arms,
Yok'd in his martial harness from my side
Swerv'd not; living or dead be this his praise.
But what concerns our kingdom and the Gods,
Holding a general council of the state,
We will consult; that what is well may keep
Its goodness permanent, and what requires
Our healing hand, with mild severity
May be corrected. But my royal roof
Now will I visit, and before its hearths
Offer libations to the gods, who sent me
To this far distant war, and led me back.
Firm stands the victory that attends our arms.

CLYTEMNESTRA, AGAMEMNON, CHORUS.

CLYT. Friends, fellow-citizens, whose counsels guide *
The state of Argos, in your reverend presence

* According to the simplicity of ancient manners, Clytemnestra should have waited to receive her husband in the house; but her affected fondness led her to disregard decorum. Nothing can be conceived more artful than her speech; but that very art shews, that her heart had little share in it: her pretended sufferings during his absence are touched with great delicacy and tenderness; but had they been real, she would not have stopped him here with the querulous recital: the joy for his return, had she felt that joy, would have broke out first; this is deferred to the latter part of her address; there indeed she has amassed every image expressive of welcome; but her solicitude to assemble these leads her beyond nature, which expresses her strongest passions in broken sentences, and with a nervous brevity, not with the cold formality of a set harangue. Her last words are another instance of the double sense which expresses reverence to her husband, but intends the bloody design with which her soul was agitated.

A wife's fond love I blush not to disclose:
Thus habit softens dread. From my full heart
Will I recount my melancholy life
Thro' the long stay of my lov'd lord at Troy:
For a weak woman, in her husband's absence,
Pensive to sit and lonely in her house,
'Tis dismal, list'ning to each frightful tale:
First one alarms her, then another comes
Charg'd with worse tidings. Had my poor lord here
Suffer'd as many wounds as common fame
Reported, like a net he had been pierc'd:
Had he been slain oft' as the loud-tongued rumour
Was nois'd abroad, this triple-form'd Geryon*,
A second of the name, whilst yet alive,
For of the dead I speak not, well might boast
To have receiv'd his triple mail, to die
In each form singly. Such reports oppress'd me,
Till life became distasteful, and my hands
Were prompted oft' to deeds of desperation.
Nor is thy son Orestes, the dear tie
That binds us each to th' other, present here
To aid me, as he ought: nay, marvel not,
The friendly Strophius with a right strong arm
Protects him in Phocæa; whilst his care

* Geryon was a king of Spain, killed by Hercules, fabled to have three bodies, because he had three armies commanded by his three sons. Clytemnestra compares her husband to this giant, and says, that if he had been slain as often as was reported, this second triple Geryon (meaning Agamemnon under that name, for it were ominous to speak of the dead) might well boast to have received his triple vest, meaning his three bodies, and to have died once in each form. Mr. Heath might never have heard that Geryon, though he had three bodies, died more than once; nor does Pauw say it; but this does not hinder Clytemnestra from making the supposition, and nothing more is intended; the words of Æschylus are express,

Ἅπαξ ἑκάστῳ κατθανὼν μορφώματι.

Saw danger threat me in a double form,
The loss of thee at Troy, the anarchy
That might ensue, shou'd madness drive the people
To deeds of violence, as men are prompt
Insultingly to trample on the fall'n:
Such care dwells not with fraud. At thy return
The gushing fountains of my tears are dried,
Save that my eyes are weak with midnight watchings,
Straining, thro' tears, if haply they might see
Thy signal fires, that claim'd my fix'd attention.
If they were clos'd in sleep, a silly fly
Wou'd, with its slitghest murm'rings, make me start,
And wake me to more fears. For thy dear sake
All this I suffer'd: but my jocund heart
Forgets it all, whilst I behold my lord,
My guardian, the strong anchor of my hope,
The stately column that supports my house,
Dear as an only child to a fond parent;
Welcome as land, which the tost mariner
Beyond his hope descries; welcome as day
After a night of storms with fairer beams
Returning; welcome as the liquid lapse
Of fountain to the thirsty traveller:
So pleasant is it to escape the chain
Of hard constraint. Such greeting I esteem
Due to thy honour: let it not offend,
For I have suffer'd much. But, my lov'd lord,
Leave now that car; nor on the bare ground set
That royal foot, beneath whose mighty tread
Troy trembled. Haste, ye virgins, to whose care
This pleasing office is entrusted, spread
The streets with tapestry; let the ground be cover'd
With richest purple, leading to the palace;
That honour with just state may grace his entry,

Tho' unexpected. My attentive care,
Shall, if the Gods permit, dispose the rest
To welcome his high glories, as I ought.

AGAM. Daughter of Leda, guardian of my house *,
Thy words are correspondent to my absence,
Of no small length. With better grace my praise
Wou'd come from others: Sooth me not with strains
Of adulation, as a girl; nor raise,
As to some proud barbaric king, that loves
Loud acclamations echoed from the mouths
Of prostrate worshippers, a clamorous welcome:
Nor spread the streets with tapestry; 'tis invidious;
These are the honours we should pay the Gods.
For mortal man to tread on ornaments
Of rich embroid'ry——No: I dare not do it:
Respect me as a man, not as a God.
Why should my foot pollute these vests, that glow
With various tinctur'd radiance? My full fame
Swells high without it; and the temperate rule
Of cool discretion in the choicest gift
Of fav'ring Heav'n. Happy the man, whose life
Is spent in friendship's calm security.
These sober joys be mine, I ask no more.

CLYT. Do not thou thwart the purpose of my mind.

AGAM. My mind, be well assur'd, shall not be tainted.

CLYT. Hast thou in fear made to the Gods this vow?

AGAM. Free, from my soul in prudence have I said it.

* Agamemnon appears here in the most amiable light; he knows his dignity, and is not insensible to the fame which attends him as the conqueror of Asia; but by reproving the excessive adulation of Clytemnestra, he shows that manly firmness of mind, that becoming moderation, which distinguishes the sober state of the king of Argos from the barbaric pride of an Asiatic monarch. The part, which he has to act, is short, but it gives us a picture of the highest military glory, and of true regal virtue, and shows us that as a man he was modest, gentle, and humane.

CLYT. Had Priam's arms prevail'd, how had he acted?
AGAM. On rich embroid'ry he had proudly trod.
CLYT. Then dread not thou th' invidious tongues of men.
AGAM. Yet has the popular voice much potency.
CLYT. But the unenvied is not of the happy.
AGAM. Ill suits it thy soft sex to love contention.
CLYT. To yield sometimes adds honour to the mighty.
AGAM. Art thou so earnest to obtain thy wish?
CLYT. Let me prevail: indulge me with this conquest.
AGAM. If such thy will, haste some one, from my feet
Unloose these high-bound buskins, let some God
Look down indignant, if with them I press
These vests sea-tinctur'd: Shame it were to spoil
With unclean tread their rich and costly texture.
Of these enough.—This stranger, let her find
A gentle treatment: from high Heav'n the God
Looks with an eye of favour on the victor
That bears his high state meekly; for none wears
Of his free choice the yoke of slavery.
And she, of many treasures the prime flow'r
Selected by the troops, has follow'd me.
Well, since I yield me vanquish'd by thy voice,
I go, treading on purple, to my house.
CLYT. Does not the sea, and who shall drain it, yield
Unfailing stores of these rich tints, that glow
With purple radiance? These this lordly house
Commands, blest with abundance, but to want
A stranger. I had vow'd his foot shou'd tread
On many a vestment, when the victims bled,
The hallow'd pledge which this fond breast devis'd
For his return. For whilst the vig'rous root
Maintains its grasp, the stately head shall rise,
And with its waving foliage screen the house

From the fierce dog-star's fiery pestilence.
And on thy presence at thy houshold hearth,
E'en the cold winter feels a genial warmth.
But when the hot sun in the unripe grape*
Matures the wine, the husband's perfect virtues
Spread a refreshing coolness. Thou, O Jove,
Source of perfection, perfect all my vows,
And with thy influence favour my intents!

* This passage is difficult. The context is this, whilst the root remains (meaning the husband) the branches reach to the house, and spread a shade over it against the heat of the dog-star. There is an image of this nature in Caractacus far superior to this of Æschylus,

Hail, hallow'd oaks!—Happy foresters,
Ye, with your tough and intertwisted roots,
Grasp the firm rocks ye sprung from, and, erect
In knotty hardihood, still proudly spread
Your leafy banners 'gainst the tyrannous north,
Who Roman like assails you.

Clytemnestra goes on, When thou art present at thy domestic hearth, thou spreadest a warmth even in the winter; and in the hottest season the husband's presence gives a refreshing coolness to the house; the first image is of protection, the other two of agreeableness, like this of Ovid,

Solibus hibernis, æstivâ gratior umbrâ.

The expression in the original is highly metaphorical, "when Jupiter forms "the wine from the unripe grape," which means no more than to denote the autumnal heat; it being no uncommon thing for an original rusticity of conception to be turned into parade and ornament.

And now, having mentioned her husband under the usual epithet of *the perfect*, (see Stanley on the Supp. v. 82. and on this place: hence their Ζεὺς τέλειος, and Ἥρη τέλεια, as presiding over marriages), she artfully addresses Jupiter, as the source of perfection, to perfect her intent: this play on the word is the ebullition of her heated imagination, impatient to execute her horrid purpose, as the opportunity was now arrived; and is another instance of that ambiguity with which this artful and determined woman took a pride in concealing her thoughts under the very words that expressed them.

CHORUS.

STRO. 1. What may this mean *? Along the skies
Why do these dreadful portents roll?
Visions of terror, spare my aching eyes,
Nor shake my sad presaging soul!
In accents dread, not tun'd in vain,
Why bursts the free, unbidden strain?
These are no phantoms of the night,
That vanish at the faithful light
Of stedfast confidence. Thou sober pow'r,
Whither, ah, whither art thou gone?
For since the long-pass'd hour,
When first for Troy the naval band
Unmoor'd their vessels from the strand,
Thou hast not in my bosom fix'd thy throne.

ANTIS. 1. At length they come †: these faithful eyes,
See them return'd to Greece again:
Yet, while the sullen lyre in silence lies,
Erinnys wakes the mournful strain:
Her dreadful pow'rs possess my soul,
And bid the untaught measures roll;

* The learned reader is sufficiently sensible of the difficulty of this strophe; the translator understands it differently from the annotators, adhering however to Pauw's interpretation of time and place, which is supported against Mr. Heath by the two last lines. The Chorus, under the power of an immediate inspiration, in the sublimest style of poetry, is struck with visions of terror, Δεῖγμα προσατήριον, that fill his heart with presages, and compel him to utter the prophetic strain ἀχέλευστος, ἄμισθος. Indeed no hope, in which he could confide, had touched his heart since the fleet sailed from Aulis, and the troops advanced to Troy.

† Now indeed I see they are returned (continues the Chorus), yet Erinnys begins the strain, without waiting for the accompaniment of the lyre. Every idea is gloomy and hopeless; yet he wishes that his fears may be in vain.

Swell in rude notes the dismal lay,
And fright enchanting hope away;
Whilst, ominous of ill, grim-visag'd care
Incessant whirls my tortur'd heart.
Vain be each anxious fear!
Return, fair hope, thy seat resume,
Dispel this melancholy gloom,
And to my soul thy gladsome light impart!

STRO. 2. Ah me, what hope! This mortal state *
Nothing but cruel change can know.
Shou'd cheerful health our vig'rous steps await,
Enkindling all her roseate glow;
Disease creeps on with silent pace,
And withers ev'ry blooming grace.
Proud sails the bark; the fresh gales breathe,
And dash her on the rocks beneath.
In the rich house her treasures plenty pours:
Comes sloth, and from her well-pois'd sling
Scatters the piled up stores.
Yet disease makes not all her prey:
Nor sinks the bark beneath the sea:
And famine sees the heav'n-sent harvest spring.

ANTIS. 2. But when forth-welling from the wound †

* In the mutable state of human life, sickness is the contiguous neighbour to health; the bark in its fairest course is driven on a rock; and sloth dissipates the greatest wealth; yet the whole house does not fall under the disease; the bark is not swallowed up by the sea; and Jupiter has many ways to restore the wasted wealth.

† But when man's warm blood streams upon the ground, what charm can recal his life? Not even Æsculapius himself, whom Jupiter did not prevent through jealousy of his life-restoring art. And now, having uttered this ominous presage of blood and death, prohibent jam cætera parcæ scire, the inspiration ceases, and he becomes dark and silent. This ode is conceived in the sublimest spirit of poetry, yet that is but its second excellence; it receives

The purple-streaming blood shall fall,
And the warm tide distain the reeking ground,
Who shall the vanish'd life recal?
Nor verse, nor music's magic pow'r,
Nor the fam'd leech's boasted lore;
Not that his art restor'd the dead,
Jove's thunder burst upon his head.—
But that the Fates forbid, and chain my tongue,
My heart, at inspiration's call,
Wou'd the rapt strain prolong:
Now all is dark; it raves in vain,
And, as it pants with trembling pain,
Desponding feels its fiery transports fall.

CLYTEMNESTRA, CASSANDRA, CHORUS.

CLYT. Thou, too, Cassandra, enter; since high Jove,
Gracious to thee, hath plac'd thee in this house *,
With many slaves to share the common rites,
And deck the altar of the fav'ring God.
Come from that chariot, and let temperance rule
Thy lofty spirit: e'en Alcmena's son †,

its first grace from propriety. As the odes in this tragedy necessarily contract an obscurity from their prophetic turn, and have been generally complained of as being almost unintelligible, the reader, it is hoped, will not be displeased at these attempts to elucidate them.

* Stanley reads *ἀμηνίτως*, Auratus *ἀμηνίτοις*: Nescio quare, says Pauw: Ego igitur dicam, says Heath; Quia non *ἀμηνίτως*, sine irâ, Jupiter videbatur potuisse statuere Cassandram ex reginâ, servam in inimicorum patriæque suæ vastatorum ædibus. One should be cautious in opposing the fine taste of Stanley. Clytemnestra tells Cassandra that her office should be to stand at the altar of Jupiter; which was the most honourable department that could be given to captives of rank; the Phœnissæ of Euripides were in this manner devoted to the Pythian Apollo; and Manto, the celebrated daughter of Tiresias, was sent to Delphos by Alcmæon, when he took Thebes: Jupiter therefore was gracious to Cassandra, by thus alleviating her misfortunes.

† Hercules had demanded in marriage Iole, the daughter of Eurytus king

Sold as a slave, submitted to the yoke
Perforce; and if necessity's hard hand
Hath sunk thee to this fortune, our high rank,
With greatness long acquainted, knows to use
Its pow'r with gentleness: the low-born wretch*,
That from his mean degree rises at once
To unexpected riches, treats his slaves
With barbarous and unbounded insolence.
From us thou wilt receive a juster treatment.

CHOR. These are plain truths: since in the toils of fate
Thou art inclos'd, submit, if thou canst brook
Submission; haply I advise in vain.

CLYT. If that her language, like the twittering swallow's †,
Be not all barbarous and unknown, my words

of Œchalia: the father desired time to determine; which Hercules considered as a refusal, and in revenge privately led away some fine horses of the king. His son, Iphitus, suspecting that Hercules had taken them, went to Tyrinthia in search of them. Hercules took him to the top of a high tower, and bade him look around to see if he could discover them; but Iphitus not seeing them, Hercules said that he was wrongfully accused, and threw the prince from the tower: being seized with some malady, as a punishment for this murder, and the usual expiations not availing, he consulted the oracle of Apollo, who told him that he must publicly sell himself for a slave, and send the money arising from the sale to the children of Iphitus: his malady continuing, he went into Asia, there voluntarily suffered one of his friends to sell him, and became the slave of Omphale, daughter of Jardanus, and queen of the Meonians. M. Court de Gebelin, Allegories Orientales, p. 164.

* This bad woman, we see, was capable of the generous sentiments becoming her high rank, but her ungoverned passions extinguished them all. Probably she was not the first that had descanted on the insolence of upstart wealth; certainly she is not the last, who has reason to observe of persons suddenly enriched, "that they have not had their money long enough to be "gentlemen."

† Mr. Heath well observes, that the ancient Grecians called all nations, that spoke not "the sweet helladic tongue," swallows. The last line of this speech is another instance of the double sense, where more is meant than meets the ear.

Within shall with persuasion move her mind.

CHOR. She speaks what best beseems thy present state;
Follow, submit, and leave that lofty car.

CLYT. I have not leisure here before the gates
T' attend on her; for at the inmost altar,
Blazing with sacred fires, the victims stand
Devoted to the Gods for his return
So much beyond our hopes. If to comply
Thou form thy mind, delay not: if thy tongue
Knows not to sound our language, let thy signs
Supply the place of words, speak with thy hand.

CHOR. Of foreign birth she understands us not;
But as new taken struggles in the net.

CLYT. 'Tis frenzy this, the impulse of a mind
Disorder'd; from a city lately taken
She comes, and knows not how to bear the curb,
'Till she has spent her rage in bloody foam *.
But I no more waste words to be disdain'd.

CHOR. My words, for much I pity her, shall bear †
No mark of anger. Go, unhappy fair one,
Forsake thy chariot, unreluctant learn
To bear this new yoke of necessity.

CASS. Woe, woe! O Earth, Apollo, O Apollo!

CHOR. Why with that voice of woe invoke Apollo?

* As this is the last, so is it the strongest instance of the double sense before observed; and her passion here carries it as far as could be, without endangering a discovery;

She's gone, a manifest serpent by her sting
Discover'd in the end, till now conceal'd.

† The Chorus, as it became them, express themselves with tenderness and humanity to the unhappy princess: this introduces a scene the finest perhaps that tragedy has yet known. It would be an affront to the understanding of the reader to point out the nice gradation of the prophetic fury; and that heart must be hard indeed, which does not feel the pathos.

Ill do these notes of grief accord with him *.

CASS. Woe, woe! O Earth! Apollo, O Apollo!

CHOR. Again her inauspicious voice invokes
The God, whose ears are not attun'd to woe.

CASS. Apollo, O Apollo, fatal leader,
Yet once more, God, thou leadest me to ruin!

CHOR. She seems prophetic of her own misfortunes,
Retaining, tho' a slave, the divine spirit †.

CASS. Apollo, O Apollo, fatal leader,
Ah, whither hast thou led me? to what house?

CHOR. Is that unknown? Let me declare it then:
This is the royal mansion of th' Atridæ.

CASS. It is a mansion hated by the Gods,
Conscious to many a foul and horrid deed;
A slaughter'd-house, that reeks with human gore.

CHOR. This stranger seems, like the nice-scented hound,
Quick in the trace of blood, which she will find.

CASS. These are convincing proofs. Look there, look there,
Whilst pity drops a tear, the children butcher'd ‡,
The father feasting on their roasted flesh!

CHOR. Thy fame, prophetic virgin, we have heard;
We know thy skill; but wish no prophets now.

CASS. Ye pow'rs of Heav'n, what does she now design?
What new and dreadful deed of woe is this?
What dreadful ill designs she in the house,
Intolerable, irreparable mischief,
Whilst far she sends the succouring pow'r away?

* Θρηνωδίαι, strains of mourning, were proper only to the infernal Gods.

† The free spirit of Greece breathes in this; it thought that the day, which saw a man a slave, took away half his virtues.

‡ Oracular as the words of Cassandra are, they sufficiently for the present purpose express the feast of Thyestes. A proper place will be found to give the full history of the house of Atreus.

CHOR. These prophecies surpass my apprehension:
The first I knew, they echo thro' the city.
CASS. Ah daring wretch, dost thou achieve this deed,
Thus in the bath the partner of thy bed
Refreshing? How shall I relate th' event?
Yet speedy shall it be. E'en now advanc'd
Hand above hand extended threatens high.
CHOR. I comprehend her not; her words are dark,
Perplexing me like abstruse oracles.
CASS. Ha! What is this, that I see here before me?
Is it the net of hell? Or rather her's,
Who shares the bed, and plans the murderous deed.
Let discord, whose insatiable rage
Pursues this race, howl thro' the royal rooms
Against the victim destin'd to destruction.
CHOR. What Fury dost thou call within this house
To hold her orgies? The dread invocation
Appals me *; to my heart the purple drops
Flow back; a deathlike mist covers my eyes,
With expectation of some sudden ruin.
CASS. See, see there: from the heifer keep the bull!—
O'er his black brows she throws th' entangling vest,
And smites him with her huge two-handed engine.
He falls, amidst the cleansing laver falls:
I tell thee of the bath, the treach'rous bath.
CHOR. T' unfold the obscure oracles of Heav'n
Is not my boast; beneath the shadowing veil
Misfortune lies: When did th' inquirer learn

* This passage is exceedingly difficult, where the author intended no obscurity; which shows the present reading to be corrupt. Pauw has at least made sense of it, which we readily embrace till a better can be found: but it is his hard fate always to be reprobated; therefore Mr. Heath refers the χροκοβάφης σαγὼν, which the context requires us to apply to the Chorus, to Cassandra, as if through the force of the prophetic fury she had fallen to the ground in a trance; whereas it is the critic that is in a deliquium.

From the dark sentence an event of joy?
From time's first records the diviner's voice
Gives the sad heart a sense of misery.

CASS. Ah me unhappy? Wretched, wretched fate!
For my own sufferings join'd call forth these wailings.
Why hast thou brought me hither? Wretched me!
Is it for this, that I may die with him?

CHOR. This is the frenzy of a mind possess'd
With wildest ravings. Thy own woes thou wailest
In mournful melody; like the sweet bird,
That darkling pours her never-ceasing plaint;
And for her Itys, her lost Itys *, wastes
In sweetest woe her melancholy life.

CASS. Ah me! the fortune of the nightingale
Is to be envied: on her light-pois'd plumes
She wings at will her easy way, nor knows
The anguish of a tear, whilst o'er my head
Th' impending sword threatens the fatal wound.

CHOR. Whence is this violent, this wild presage
Of ill? Thy fears are vain; yet with a voice
That terrifies, tho' sweet, aloud thou speakest
Thy sorrows. Whence hast thou deriv'd these omens,

* Tereus, king of Thrace, had married Procne, the daughter of Pandion king of Athens: afterwards, inflamed with lust, he deflowered Philomela, the sister of Procne, and to prevent a discovery cut out her tongue, and confined her in a hunting-seat in a wood; the injured lady wrought her story in the loom, and contrived to send the web to her sister. Procne, pretending the rites of Bacchus, attended with a female train, burst open the gates of the lodge, and carried her sister to the palace; there they killed Itys, the son of Tereus and Procne, and served him up as a feast to his father; when he had satiated his hunger, and called for his son, Procne told him what she had done; Philomela, at the same time, besmeared with blood, rushed into the room, and threw the head of Itys in his face. Tereus pursuing the sisters with his drawn sword was changed into a Lapwing, Procne into a Swallow, and Philomela into a Nightingale. Thus Ovid tells the story; but Æschylus, and after him Euripides and Sophocles. represent Procne as changed into the Nightingale.

Thus deeply mark'd with characters of death?

CASS. Alas the bed, the bridal bed of Paris,
Destructive to his friends! Paternal stream,
Scamander, on thy banks with careless steps
My childhood stray'd: but now methinks I go,
Alas, how soon! to prophesy around
Cocytus, and the banks of Acheron!

CHOR. Perspicuous this, and clear! the new-born babe
Might comprehend it: but thy piercing griefs,
Bewailing thus the miseries of thy fate,
Strike deep; they wound me to my very soul.

CASS. Ah my poor country, my poor bleeding country,
Fall'n, fall'n for ever! And you, sacred altars,
That blaz'd before my father's tow'red palace,
Not all your victims cou'd avert your doom!
And on the earth soon shall my warm blood flow.

CHOR. This is consistent with thy former ravings.
Or does some God indeed incumbent press
Thy soul, and modulate thy voice to utter
These lamentable notes of woe and death?
What the event shall be, exceeds my knowledge.

CASS. The oracle no more shall shroud its visage
Beneath a veil, as a new bride that blushes
To meet the gazing eye; but like the sun,
When with his orient ray he gilds the east,
Shall burst upon you in a flood of light,
Disclosing deeds of deeper dread. Away,
Ye mystic coverings! And you, reverend men,
Bear witness to me, that with steady step
I trace foul deeds that smell above the earth.
For never shall that band, whose yelling notes
In dismal accord pierce th' affrighted ear,
Forsake this house. The genius of the feast,
Drunk with the blood of men, and fir'd from thence

To bolder daring, ranges thro' the rooms
Link'd with his kindred Furies: these possess
The mansion, and in horrid measures chaunt
The first base deed *; recording with abhorrence
Th' adulterous lust, that stain'd a brother's bed.
What, like a skilful archer, have I lodg'd
My arrow in the mark? No trifling this,
T' alarm you with false sounds. But swear to me,
In solemn attestation, that I know,
And speak the old offences of this house.

CHOR. In such a rooted ill what healing pow'r
Resides there in an oath? But much I marvel
That thou, the native of a foreign realm,
Of foreign tongue, canst speak our language freely,
As Greece had been thy constant residence.

CASS. Apollo grac'd me with this skill. At first
The curb of modesty was on my tongue.

CHOR. Did the God feel the force of young desire?
In each gay breast ease fans the wanton flame.

CASS. With all the fervor of impatient love
He strove to gratify my utmost wish.

CHOR. And didst thou listen to his tempting lures?

CASS. First I assented, then deceiv'd the God.

CHOR. Wast thou then fraught with these prophetic arts?

CASS. E'en then I told my country all its woes.

CHOR. The anger of the God fell heavy on thee?

CASS. My voice, for this offence, lost all persuasion.

CHOR. To us it seems a voice of truth divine.

CASS. Woe, woe is me! Again the furious pow'r
Swells in my lab'ring breast; again commands

* By this first base deed, Pauw understands the horrid feast at which Atreus entertained his brother Thyestes: Heath, the murder of Myrtilus, of which there is no mention by Æschylus: it relates to the adultery of Thyestes with his brother's wife, the fatal cause of all the subsequent evils.

My bursting voice; and what I speak is Fate.—
Look, look, behold those children.—There they sit;
Such are the forms, that in the troubled night
Distract our sleep.—By a friend's hands they died:
Are these the ties of blood?—See, in their hands
Their mangled limbs, horrid repast, they bear:
Th' invited father shares th' accursed feast.
For this the sluggard savage, that at ease
Rolls on his bed, nor rouses from his lair,
'Gainst my returning lord, for I must wear
The yoke of slavery, plans the dark design
Of death. Ah me! the chieftain of the fleet,
The vanquisher of Troy, but little knows
What the smooth tongue of mischief, filed to words
Of glozing courtesy, with Fate her friend,
Like Ate ranging in the dark, can do
Calmly: such deeds a woman dares: she dares
Murder a man. What shall I call this mischief?
An Amphisbæna? or a Scylla rather,
That in the vex'd rocks holds her residence,
And meditates the mariner's destruction?
Mother of Hell, 'midst friends enkindling discord
And hate implacable! With dreadful daring
How did she shout, as if the battle swerv'd?
Yet with feign'd joy she welcomes his return.—
These words may want persuasion. What of that?
What must come, will come: and e'er long with grief
Thou shalt confess my prophecies are true.

CHOR. Thyestes' bloody feast oft have I heard of,
Always with horror; and I tremble now
Hearing th' unaggravated truth. What else
She utters, leads my wand'ring thoughts astray
In wild uncertainty.

CASS. Then mark me well,

Thou shalt behold the death of Agamemnon.

CHOR. To better omens tune that voice unbless'd,
Or in eternal silence be it sunk.

CASS. This is an ill no medicine can heal.

CHOR. Not if it happens: but avert it, Heav'n!

CASS. To pray be thine; the murd'rous deed is theirs.

CHOR. What man dares perpetrate this dreadful act?

CASS. How widely dost thou wander from my words?

CHOR. I heard not whose bold hand shou'd do the deed.

CASS. Yet speak I well the language of your Greece.

CHOR. The gift of Phœbus this; no trivial grace.

CASS. Ah, what a sudden flame comes rushing on me!
I burn, I burn. Apollo, O Apollo!
This lioness, that in a sensual sty
Roll'd with the wolf, the generous lion absent,
Will kill me. And the sorceress, as she brews
Her philt'red cup, will drug it with my blood.
She glories, as against her husband's life
She whets the axe, her vengeance falls on him
For that he came accompanied by me.—
Why do I longer wear these useless honours,
This laurel wand, and these prophetic wreaths?
Away; before I die I cast you from me;
Lie there, and perish; I am rid of you;
Or deck the splendid ruin of some other.
Apollo rends from me these sacred vestments,
Who saw me in his rich habiliments
Mock'd 'midst my friends, doubtless without a cause.
When in opprobrious terms they jeer'd my skill,
And treated me as a poor vagrant wretch,
That told events from door to door for bread,
I bore it all: but now the prophet God,
That with his own arts grac'd me, sinks me down
To this low ruin. As my father fell

Butcher'd e'en at the altar, like the victim's
My warm blood at the altar shall be shed:
Nor shall we die unhonour'd by the Gods.
He comes, dreadful in punishment, the son
Of this bad mother, by her death t' avenge
His murder'd father: Distant tho' he roams,
An outcast and an exile, by his friends
Fenc'd from these deeds of violence, he comes
In solemn vengeance for his father laid
Thus low.—But why for foreign miseries
Does the tear darken in my eye, that saw
The fall of Ilium, and its haughty conq'rors
In righteous judgment thus receive their meed?
But forward now; I go to close the scene,
Nor shrink from death. I have a vow in Heav'n:
And further I adjure these gates of Hell,
Well may the blow be aim'd, that whilst my blood
Flows in a copious stream, I may not feel
The fierce, convulsive agonies of death;
But gently sink, and close my eyes in peace.

CHOR. Unhappy, in thy knowledge most unhappy,
Long have thy sorrows flow'd. But if indeed
Thou dost foresee thy death, why, like the heifer
Led by an heav'nly impulse, do thy steps
Advance thus boldly to the cruel altar?

CASS. I cou'd not by delay escape my fate.

CHOR. Yet is there some advantage in delay.

CASS. The day is come: by flight I shou'd gain little.

CHOR. Thy boldness adds to thy unhappiness.

CASS. None of the happy shuns his destin'd end.

CHOR. True; but to die with glory crowns our praise.

CASS. So died my father, so his noble sons.

CHOR. What may this mean? Why backward dost thou start?
Do thy own thoughts with horror strike thy soul?

CASS. The scent of blood and death breathes from this house.
CHOR. The victims now are bleeding at the altar.
CASS. 'Tis such a smell as issues from the tomb.
CHOR. This is no Syrian odour in the house.
CASS. Such tho' it be, I enter, to bewail
My fate, and Agamemnon's. To have liv'd,
Let it suffice. And think not, gen'rous strangers,
Like the poor bird that flutters o'er the bough,
Thro' fear I linger. But my dying words
You will remember, when her blood shall flow
For mine, woman's for woman's: and the man's,
For his that falls by his accursed wife.
CHOR. Thy fate, poor sufferer, fills my eyes with tears.
CASS. Yet once more let me raise my mournful voice.
Thou Sun, whose rising beams shall bless no more
These closing eyes! you, whose vindictive rage
Hangs o'er my hated murderers, Oh avenge me,
Tho', a poor slave, I fall an easy prey!
This is the state of man: in prosperous fortune
A shadow, passing light, throws to the ground *

* This is the finest image that ever entered a poet's imagination; the words seem incapable of any other interpretation than what is here given them; accordingly Grotius translates them thus,

Heu tristia hominum fata! nam res prosperas
Vel umbra facile evertat, infelicium
Imaginem omnem spongiæ delet mador.

Only for βολαῖς, Stanley wishes to read μόλις, Pauw λωβαῖς; the translator too has his conjecture. Then comes Mr. Heath, and makes a difficulty where no one ever suspected one; he retains the obnoxious word βολαῖς, on which to build his criticism; and, to our great surprise, we are suddenly entertained with a game of backgammon: if the cast be a good one, as the dice are easily overturned, so human prosperity is subverted even by a shadow; if the cast be unlucky, then a sponge wipes out the unfortunate condition of those that threw it. By γραφὴν he would willingly understand the figures impressed on the sides of the dice; but as these may not so easily be wiped out with a

Joy's baseless fabric: in adversity
Comes malice with a spunge moisten'd in gall,
And wipes each beauteous character away:
More than the first this melts my soul to pity.

CHOR. By nature man is form'd with boundless wishes
For prosperous fortune; and the great man's door
Stands ever open to that envied person,
On whom she smiles: but enter not with words,
Like this poor sufferer, of such dreadful import.
His arms the pow'rs of Heav'n have grac'd with conquest;
Troy's proud walls lie in dust; and he returns
Crown'd by the Gods with glory: but if now
His blood must for the blood there shed atone *,
If he must die for those that died, too dearly
He buys his triumph. Who of mortal men
Hears this, and dares to think his state secure?

AGAM. Oh, I am wounded with a deadly blow. [*within*

SEMI. List, list. What cry is this of wounds and death?

AGAM. Wounded again, Oh, basely, basely murder'd.

SEMI. 'Tis the king's cry; the dreadful deed is doing.
What shall we do? what measures shall we form?

SEMI. What if we spread th' alarm, and with our outcries

sponge, he is well inclined to think, that it means the chalk with which the players of ancient as well as modern times scored their games. It is peculiarly unfortunate, that this learned person could find nothing to his purpose in Pollux, Meursius, Salmasius, and Souterius, whom he consulted on this occasion. But this is not the first time this favourite annotator put his extinguisher over the flaming spirit of Æschylus.

* These words are ill understood, as alluding to the murder of Myrtilus, the supper of Thyestes, and the other horrid deeds of the house of Pelops; they refer to a melancholy observation of the Chorus in a former ode.

For never with unheedful eyes,
When slaughter'd thousands bleed,
Did the just pow'rs of Heav'n regard
The carnage of th' ensanguin'd plain.

Call at the palace gates the citizens?

SEMI. Nay rather rush we in, and prove the deed,
Whilst the fresh blood is reeking on the sword.

SEMI. I readily concur; determine then;
For something must be done, and instantly.

SEMI. That's evident. This bloody prelude threatens
More deeds of violence and tyranny.

SEMI. We linger: those that tread the paths of honour,
Late tho' she meets them, sleep not in their task.

SEMI. Perplexity and doubt distract my thoughts:
Deeds of high import ask maturest counsel.

SEMI. Such are my thoughts, since fruitless were th' attempt,
By all our pleas to raise the dead to life.

SEMI. To save our wretched lives then shall we bow
To these imperious lords, these stains of honour?

SEMI. That were a shame indeed: No: let us die;
Death is more welcome than such tyranny.

SEMI. Shall we then take these outcries, which we heard,
For proofs, and thence conclude the king is slain?

SEMI. We shou'd be well assur'd e'er we pronounce:
To know, and to conjecture, differ widely.

SEMI. There's reason in thy words. Best enter then,
And see what fate attends the son of Atreus.

CLYTEMNESTRA, CHORUS.

CLYT. To many a fair speech suited to the times *

* The irresolution of the Chorus is here relieved by the entrance of Clytemnestra. Having perpetrated the bloody deed, she throws off the disguise, and appears at once in her real character, determined and daring in her designs, calm, intrepid, and bidding defiance to the consequences. She triumphs in the deed, and takes a pride in recounting her deep-laid treachery, and the particulars of its execution. Not satisfied with killing her husband, she mangled him when dead, which she calls a sacrifice to Pluto, and glories in the blood with which she was stained; nay, would decency permit it, she would even make libations over the dead, which Mr. Heath judiciously explains, by

If my words now be found at variance,
I shall not blush. For when the heart conceives
Thoughts of deep vengeance on a foe, what means
T' achieve the deed more certain, than to wear
The form of friendship, and with circling wiles
Inclose him in th' insuperable net?
This was no hasty, rash-conceiv'd design;
But form'd with deep, premeditated thought,
Incens'd with wrongs; and often have I stood,
T' assay the execution, where he fell;
And plann'd it so, for I with pride avow it,
He had no pow'r t' escape, or to resist,
Entangled in the gorgeous robe, that shone,
Fatally rich. I struck him twice, and twice
He groan'd, then died. A third time as he lay
I gored him with a wound; a grateful present
To the stern God, that in the realms below
Reigns o'er the dead: there let him take his seat.
He lay; and spouting from his wounds a stream
Of blood, bedew'd me with these crimson drops.
I glory in them, like the genial earth,
When the warm show'rs of Heav'n descend, and wake
The flow'rets to unfold their vermeil leaves.
Come then, ye reverend senators of Argos,
Joy with me, if your hearts be turn'd to joy;
And such I wish them. Were it decent now

telling us, that it was a custom among the ancients after the defeat of their enemies, to pour libations to the Gods their deliverers, in gratitude for their victory and freedom. Thus Hector says, Il. vi. ult.

> These ills shall cease, whene'er by Jove's decree
> We crown the bowl to Heav'n and liberty;
> While the proud foe his frustrate triumphs mourns,
> And Greece indignant thro' her seas returns.— POPE.

The allusion to this bowl is finely carried on, and gives an air of solemnity to her speech, which breathes the genuine spirit of Æschylus.

To pour libations o'er the dead, with justice
It might be done; for his injurious pride
Fill'd for this house the cup of desolation,
Fated himself to drain it to the dregs.

CHOR. We are astonish'd at thy daring words,
Thus vaunting o'er the ruins of thy husband.

CLYT. Me, like a witless woman, wou'dst thou fright?
I tell thee, my firm soul disdains to fear.
Be thou dispos'd t' applaud, or censure me,
I reck it not: there Agamemnon lies,
My husband, slaughter'd by this hand: I dare
Avow his death, and justify the deed.

CHOR. What poison hath the baleful-teeming earth *,
Or the chaf'd billows of the foamy sea,
Giv'n thee for food, or mingled in thy cup,
To work thee to this frenzy? Thy curs'd hand
Hath struck, hath slain. For this thy country's wrath
Shall in just vengeance burst upon thy head,
And with abhorrence drive thee from the city.

CLYT. And dost thou now denounce upon my head
Vengeance, and hate, and exile? 'Gainst this man
Urging no charge! Yet he without remorse,
As if a lamb that wanton'd in his pastures
Were doom'd to bleed, cou'd sacrifice his daughter,
For whose dear sake I felt a mother's pains,
T' appease the winds of Thrace. Shou'd not thy voice

* It would not be easy to account for the irresolution of the Chorus before, but that it was in the Fates that Cassandra should never be believed, and the catastrophe was not to be prevented: we must observe however, that there was nothing of timidity in it, nothing that shows their unwillingness to undergo even the least danger for the sake of saving, or avenging their king: the spirit of Æschylus revolts at the supposition: and these tame old men, though the danger was now imminent to themselves, brave the queen to her face, and even threaten her and Ægisthus with the vengeance of the state: this free and manly spirit is well supported to the end.

Adjudge this man to exile, in just vengeance
For such unholy deeds? Scarce hast thou heard
What I have done, but sentence is pronounc'd,
And that with rigour too. But mark me well,
I boldly tell thee that I bear a soul
Prepar'd for either fortune: if thy hand
Be stronger, use thy pow'r: but if the Gods
Prosper my cause, be thou assur'd, old man,
Thou shalt be taught a lesson of discretion.

CHOR. Aspiring are thy thoughts, and thy proud vaunts
Swell with disdain; e'en yet thy madding mind
Is drunk with slaughter; with a savage grace
The thick blood stains thine eye. But soon thy friends
Faithless shall shrink from thy unshelter'd side,
And leave thee to just vengeance, blow for blow.

CLYT. Hear then this solemn oath: By that revenge,
Which for my daughter I have greatly taken;
By the dread pow'rs of Ate and Erinnys,
To whom my hand devoted him a victim,
Without a thought of fear I range these rooms,
Whilst present to my aid Ægisthus stands,
As he hath stood, guarding my social hearth:
He is my shield, my strength, my confidence.
Here lies my base betrayer, who at Troy
Cou'd revel in the arms of each Chryseis;
He, and his captive minion; she that mark'd
Portents and prodigies, and with ominous tongue
Presag'd the Fates; a wanton harlotry,
True to the rower's benches: their just meed
Have they receiv'd. See where he lies; and she,
That like the swan warbled her dying notes *,

* As the swan, living or dying, is a very unmusical bird, it has been the subject of wonder whence the idea of his melody at his death should arise. Lucian is very pleasant on the occasion; the κύκνειον ᾆσμα became a proverb;

His paranymph lies with him, to my bed
Leaving the darling object of my wishes.

CHOR. No slow-consuming pains, to torture us
Fix'd to the groaning couch, await us now;
But Fate comes rushing on, and brings the sleep
That wakes no more. There lies the king, whose virtues
Were truly royal. In a woman's cause
He suffer'd much; and by a woman perish'd.
Ah fatal Helen! in the fields of Troy
How many has thy guilt, thy guilt alone,
Stretch'd in the dust? But now by murd'rous hands
Hast thou sluic'd out this rich and noble blood,
Whose foul stains never can be purg'd. This ruin
Hath discord, raging in the house, effected.

CLYT. Wish not for death; nor bow beneath thy griefs;
Nor turn thy rage on Helen, as if she
Had drench'd the fields with blood, as she alone
Fatal to Greece had caus'd these dreadful ills.

CHOR. Tremendous fiend, that breathest thro' this house

and not only the poets, but even grave and philosophical writers have suffered themselves to be led away by it. The reader, who may not be acquainted with Mr. Bryant's works, will be pleased to see his very ingénious solution of this difficulty. "In all the places where the emigrants from Canaan, "whose insigne was the swan, settled, they were famous for their hymns and "music: all which the Greeks transferred to birds, and supposed that they "were swans, who were gifted with this harmony. When, therefore, Plu-"tarch tells us, that Apollo was pleased with the music of swans, and when "Æschylus mentions their singing their own dirges, they certainly allude to "Egyptian and Canaanitish priests, who lamented the death of Adon and "Osiris."——Analysis, vol. i. p. 380.—Hence our incomparable Milton,

Thammuz came next behind,
Whose annual wound in Lebanon allur'd
The Syrian damsels to lament his fate
In am'rous ditties all a summer's day;
While smooth Adonis from his native rock
Ran purple to the sea, suppos'd with blood
Of Thammuz yearly wounded.

Thy baleful spirit, and with equal daring *
Hast steel'd these royal sisters to fierce deeds
That rend my soul, now, like the baleful raven,
Incumbent o'er the body dost thou joy
T' affright us with thy harsh and dissonant notes!

CLYT. There's sense in this: now hast thou touch'd the key,
Rousing the Fury that from sire to son
Hath bade the stream of blood, first pour'd by her,
Descend: one sanguine tide scarce roll'd away,
Another flows in terrible succession.

CHOR. And dost thou glory in these deeds of death,
This vengeance of the Fury? Thus to pride thee
In ruin, and the havoc of thy house,
Becomes thee ill. Ah! 'tis an higher pow'r,
That thus ordains; we see the hand of Jove,
Whose will directs the fate of mortal man.

* The Chorus had before compared together the deeds of these two daughters of Tyndarus: Helena had destroyed many in the fields of Troy, Clytemnestra one man, but one of such dignity, that he was equivalent to many; the comparison is here continued, that the baleful spirit which breathed through the house of Tantalus, had steeled these royal sisters to deeds of equal daring.—HEATH.

Clytemnestra had said before, that the avenging Fury of Atreus had sacrificed the man for the children; the Chorus here replies, may an avenging Fury arise from the father to vindicate his cause; the words are express, and so understood by Pauw: Mr. Heath explains them by the old Fury of Atreus before mentioned: the μέλας Ἄρης next following is, in the language of Æschylus, the sword, and gives an obscure, but sublime prophecy of the vengeance of Orestes; Mr. Heath renders it, niger discordiæ genius, carrying its rage to such an height, as to strike horror even into him that devoured his own sons: Pauw translates it pruinam et frigus puero voraci, *i. e.* Oresti, præbebit: the difficulty lies in the word κȣροϐόρῳ, and will not readily be cleared up. Mr. Heath might have spared his ungentlemanlike censures of Pauw, had he recollected that so horrid a design in Orestes, as the murder of his mother, must have a natural tendency to *freeze his young blood.*

My king, my royal lord, what words can show
My grief, my reverence for thy princely virtues!
Art thou thus fall'n, caught in a cobweb snare,
By impious murder breathing out thy life?
Art thou thus fall'n, Ah the disloyal bed!
Secretly slaughter'd by a treach'rous hand?

CLYT. Thou say'st, and say'st aloud, I did this deed:
Say not that I, that Agamemnon's wife,
Did it: the Fury, fatal to this house,
In vengeance for Thyestes' horrid feast,
Assum'd this form, and with her ancient rage
Hath for the children sacrific'd the man.

CHOR. That thou art guiltless of this blood, what proof,
What witness?—From the father, in his cause,
Rise an avenger! Stain'd with the dark streams
Of kindred blood fierce waves the bick'ring sword,
And points the ruthless boy to deeds of horror.—
My king, my royal lord, what words can show
My grief, my reverence for thy princely virtues!
Art thou thus fall'n, caught in a cobweb snare,
By impious murder breathing out thy life?
Art thou thus fall'n, Ah the disloyal bed!
Secretly slaughter'd by a treach'rous hand?

CLYT. No: of his death far otherwise I deem,
Nothing disloyal. Nor with secret guile
Wrought he his murd'rous mischiefs on this house.
For my sweet flow'ret, opening from his stem,
My Iphigenia, my lamented child,
Whom he unjustly slew, he justly died.
Nor let him glory in the shades below;
For as he taught his sword to thirst for blood,
So by the thirsty sword his blood was shed.

CHOR. Perplex'd and troubled in my anxious thought,

Amidst the ruins of this house, despair
Hangs heavy on me. Drop by drop * no more
Descends the show'r of blood; but the wild storm
In one red torrent shakes the solid walls;
Whilst vengeance, ranging thro' the deathful scene,
For further mischief whets her fatal sword.

SEMI. O Earth, that I had rested in thy bosom,
E'er I had seen him lodg'd with thee, and shrunk
To the brief compass of a silver urn!
Who shall attend the rites of sepulture?
Who shall lament him? Thou, whose hand has shed
Thy husband's blood, wilt thou dare raise the voice
Of mourning o'er him? Thy unhallow'd hand
Renders these honours, shou'd they come from thee,
Unwelcome to his shade. What faithful tongue,
Fond to recount his great and godlike acts,
Shall steep in tears his funeral eulogy?

CLYT. This care concerns not thee: by us he fell,
By us he died; and we will bury him
With no domestic grief. But Iphigenia,
His daughter, as is meet, jocund and blith
Shall meet him on the banks of that sad stream,
The flood of sorrow, and with filial duty
Hang fondling on her father's neck, and kiss him.

CHOR. Thus insult treads on insult. Of these things
Hard is it to decide. Th' infected stain
Communicates th' infection; murder calls
For blood; and outrage on th' injurious head,
At Jove's appointed time, draws outrage down.
Thus, by the laws of nature, son succeeds

* Stanley translates the words ψεκὰς δὲ λήγει, "it ceases to fall drop by "drop;" and so common sense, and the common rules of criticism require that it should be rendered; Mr. Heath translates them by "the storm subsides for a time;" and thereby destroys the greatness of the conception.

To sire; and who shall drive him from the house?

CLYT. These are the oracles of truth. But hear me;
It likes me to the genius of the race
Of Plisthenes * to swear that what is past,
Tho' poor the satisfaction, bounds my wishes.
Hither he comes no more: No, let him stain
Some other house with gore. For me, some poor,
Some scanty pittance of the goods contents me,
Well satisfied that from this house I've driven
These frantic Furies red with kindred blood.

ÆGISTHUS, CLYTEMNESTRA, CHORUS.

ÆGIS. Hail to this joyful day, whose welcome light
Brings vengeance! Now I know that the just Gods
Look from their skies, and punish impious mortals,
Seeing this man roll'd in the blood-wove woof,
The tissue of the Furies, grateful sight,
And suffering for his father's fraudful crimes.
Atreus, his father, sovereign of this land,
Brooking no rival in his pow'r, drove out
My father and his brother, poor Thyestes,
A wretched exile: from his country far
He wander'd; but at length return'd, and stood
A suppliant before the houshold Gods,
Secure in their protection that his blood
Shou'd not distain the pavement. This man's father,
The sacrilegious Atreus, with more show
Of courtesy than friendship, spread the feast,
Devoting, such the fair pretence, the day
To hospitality and genial mirth:
Then to my father in that feast serv'd up
The flesh of his own sons: their hands and feet

The relation of Plisthenes to the house of Pelops is not well made out. Hither *he* comes no more, means the genius of the race of Plisthenes.

Hack'd off before, their undistinguish'd parts
He eat, without suspicion eat, a food
Destructive to the race. But when he knew
Th' unhallow'd deed, he rais'd a mournful cry,
And starting up with horror spurn'd to the ground
The barb'rous banquet, utt'ring many a curse
Of deepest vengeance on the house of Pelops.
Thus perish all the race of Plisthenes!
And for this cause thou seest him fall'n, his death
With justice I devis'd; for me he chas'd,
The thirteenth son, an infant in my cradle,
With my unhappy father. Nurs'd abroad,
Vengeance led back my steps, and taught my hand
From far to reach him. All this plan of ruin
Was mine, reckless of what ensues; e'en death
Were glorious, now he lies caught in my vengeance.

CHOR. T' imbitter ills with insult, this, Ægisthus,
I praise not. Thou, of thine own free accord,
Hast slain this man; such is thy boast; this plan
Of ruin, which we mourn, is thine alone.
But be thou well assur'd thou shalt not 'scape,
When, rous'd to justice, the avenging people
Shall hurl their stones with curses on thy head.

ÆGIS. From thee, who labourest at the lowest oar,
This language, and to him that holds the helm!
Thou shalt be taught, old man, what at thy age
Is an hard lesson, prudence. Chains and hunger,
Besides the load of age, have sovereign virtue
To physic the proud heart. Behold this sight *;

* Behold this sight. The learned Ger. Vossius objects to the conduct of this play, that Agamemnon is killed and buried with such quickness, that the actor had not breathing time given him. It appears from this passage, and several others, that the body yet lay where the murder was committed, and

Does it not ope thine eyes? Rest quiet then;
Contend not with the strong; there's danger in it.

CHOR. And cou'd thy softer sex, whilst the rough war
Demands its chieftain, violate his bed,
And on his first return contrive his death?

ÆGIS. No more: this sounds th' alarm to rude complaints.
The voice of Orpheus with its soothing notes
Attracted e'en the savage; whilst thy yells
To rage inflame the gentle: but take heed;
Dungeons and chains may teach thee moderation.

CHOR. Shalt thou reign king in Argos? Thou, whose soul
Plotted this murder; whilst thy coward hand
Shrunk back, nor dared to execute the deed?

ÆGIS. Wiles and deceit are female qualities:
The memory of my ancient enmity
Had wak'd suspicion. Master of his treasures,
Be it my next attempt to gain the people:
Whome'er I find unwilling to submit,
Him, like an high-fed and unruly horse
Reluctant to the harness, rigour soon
Shall tame: confinement, and her meagre comrade
Keen hunger, will abate his fiery mettle.

CHOR. Did not the baseness of thy coward soul
Unman thee to this murder, that a woman,
Shame to her country and her country's Gods,
Must dare the horrid deed? But when Orestes,
Where'er he breathes the vital air, returns,
Good fortune be his guide, shall not his hand
Take a bold vengeance in the death of both?

ÆGIS. Such since thy thoughts and words, soon shalt thou feel—

CHOR. Help, ho! soldiers and friends; the danger's near;

the funeral rites are spoken of as to be performed at some future indefinite time.

Help, ho! advance in haste, with your drawn swords!

ÆGIS. My sword is drawn: Ægisthus dares to die.

CHOR. Prophetic be thy words! We hail the omen *.

CLYT. Dearest of men, do not heap ills on ills:
I wish not to exasperate, but to heal
Misfortune's past: enough is giv'n to vengeance;
Let no more blood be spilt. Go then, old men,
Each to your homes; go, whilst ye may, in peace.
What hath been done the rigour of the times
Compell'd, and hard necessity; the weight
Of these afflictions, grievous as the are,
By too severe a doom falls on our heads.
Disdain not to be taught, tho' by a woman.

ÆGIS. Ay; but to hear this vain, tongue-doughty babbler,
Lavish of speech that tempts to desperate deeds,
It moves me from the firmness of my temper.

CHOR. An Argive scorns to fawn on guilty greatness.

ÆGIS. My vengeance shall o'ertake thee at the last.

CHOR. Not if just Heav'n shall guide Orestes hither.

ÆGIS. An exile, I well know, feeds on vain hopes.

CHOR. Go on then, gorge with blood; thou hast the means.

ÆGIS. This folly, be assur'd, shall cost thee dear.

CHOR. The craven, in her presence, rears his crest †.

* The translator has rendered the word τύχην here by omen, which "in its "proper sense signifies futuræ rei signum, quod ex sermone loquentis capitur." Tully says, lib. i. Divin. Pythagorei non solum voces deorum observarunt, sed etiam hominum, quæ vocant omina. This sort of omen was supposed to depend much upon the will of the person concerned in the event: hence the phrases, "accepit omen," "arripuit omen." This was its first and proper signification.—Div. Leg.

† On observing the different characters and qualities of Agamemnon and Ægisthus, these words of old Hamlet readily present themselves as a proper comment on the conduct of Clytemnestra.

But virtue; as it never will be mov'd,
Tho' lewdness court it in the shape of Heav'n;

CLYT. Slight men, regard them not; but let us enter,
Assume our state, and order all things well.

So lust, tho' to a radiant angel link'd,
Will sate itself in a celestial bed,
And prey on garbage.——

THE

CHOEPHORÆ.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

ORESTES

PYLADES

ELECTRA

CLYTEMNESTRA

ÆGISTHUS

SERVANTS

CHORUS of TROJAN DAMES.

THE

CHOEPHORÆ.

THE Chorus in the former play, with a dignity and firmness becoming senators of Argos, had expressed their abhorrence of the murder of Agamemnon even to the face of Clytemnestra and Ægisthus, and threatened them with the anger of the Gods and the vengeance of Orestes: this is here executed.

The characters of Orestes and Electra are finely supported. A pious resentment of the murder of his father, a consciousness of his own high rank, and a just indignation at the injuries he had received from the murderers, a generous desire to deliver his country from the tyranny of these usurpers, and above all the express command of Apollo, with a promise of his protection if he obeyed, and a denunciation of the severest punishments should he dare to disobey, incited Orestes to this deed: he is

accordingly drawn as a man of a brave and daring spirit, touched with the highest sense of honour, and the most religious reverence of the Gods: in such a character there could be nothing savage and ferocious; and we are pleased to find him deeply sensible of the horror of the deed which he was obliged to perpetrate, and averse to plunge his sword into the breast of his mother. "Electra's character (in "the words of the critic) is that of a fierce and "determined, but withal of a generous and virtuous "woman. Her motives to revenge were, princi-"pally, a strong sense of justice, and superior af-"fection for a father; not a rooted, unnatural "aversion to a mother. She acted, as appears, not "from the perturbation of a tumultuous revenge, but "from a fixed abhorrence of wrong, and a virtuous "sense of duty." Consistently with this character, when she had given Orestes a spirited account of their father's murder, which drew him to declare his resolution to revenge it, showing at the same time some sign of remorse, she adds a short relation of the barbarous indignities offered to the dead body; a deed of horror which, she knew, would shock his soul. She had seen her father murdered, his body mangled, and buried without its honours; her brother, whom she loved with the tenderest affection, deprived of his throne, and exiled from his country; her mother in the arms of Ægisthus abandoning herself to her loose and infamous pleasures; she was herself continually exposed to the insults

and barbarous treatment of this ungentle mother; what wonder then that a spirit naturally lofty and sensible should catch fire at these injuries, contract a wolfish fierceness, as she expresses it, and urge her brother to sacrifice these proud oppressors to justice and revenge? But the poet, with great regard to decorum, removes her from the scene before the dreadful deed is to be committed: with regard to his management of the catastrophe, nothing could be more judicious. Orestes, who had rushed on Ægisthus with the fury of a tyger, in the presence of his mother feels himself under the restraint of filial reverence, and confesses his reluctance to shed her blood; till Pylades animates him with a sentence as solemn as the Delphic Oracle; which finely marks the fatal blow as an act of necessary justice, not of ruffian violence. Even the Chorus, who enter warmly into the interests of Electra and Orestes, and had fired him to revenge by every argument of duty, justice, law, and honour; who had wished to hear the dying groans of the guilty tyrants, and to echo them back in notes as dismal, after the deed is done, reassume the softer sentiments of humanity, and lament their fate. The remorse and madness of Orestes is touched in the finest manner. These indeed are but sketches, but they are the sketches of a great master: a succeeding poet had the skill to give them their finishing, and heightened them with the warmest glow of colouring. The spirit of Æschylus shines through this tragedy; but a certain

softening of grief hangs over it, and gives it an air of solemn magnificence.

The scene of this tragedy, as of the former, is at Argos before the royal palace. Orestes, according to the custom of ancient times, offering his hair on the tomb of his father, sees a train of females advancing from the house, and *bringing libations to the tomb;* from whence the play receives its name. The action is afterwards removed to the area before the palace. This requires no change of scene.

THE

CHOEPHORÆ.

ORESTES, PYLADES.

ORES. O THOU, that to the regions of the dead *
Bearest thy father's high behests, O hear,
Hear, Mercury, thy supplicant, protect,

* The beginning of this play is lost; but fortunately the sense remains entire. Orestes, returned from banishment, and advancing to the tomb of his father, first implores the protection of Mercury, as the conductor of the dead to the shades below, which was his known office; thus Horace,

Tu pias lætis animas reponis
Sedibus.

Then addresses his father's manes, whilst he places on the tomb his hair before consecrated to the river Inachus; and this in perfect conformity to ancient usage: thus Achilles at the funeral of Patroclus cuts off his hair, sacred to Sperchius: instances abound. As the Grecians wore their hair long, and dressed it with much elegance, we may suppose, that the depriving themselves of so considerable an ornament was an indication of grief; we are led to this by the words of Pindar, Pyth. iv.

Οὐδὲ κομᾶν πλόκαμοι
Κερθέντες εἶχον' ἀγλαοί.

When Helena, at her return to Argos soon after the death of Clytemnestra, thought it necessary to present her hair at her sister's tomb, she takes care to cut it so as not to disfigure herself; on which Electra says,

And save me; for I come, from exile come,
Revisiting my country!—Thou, dread shade,
At whose high tomb I bow, shade of my father,
Hear me, O hear! To thee these crisped locks,
Once sacred to th' nurture-giving stream
Of Inachus, in th' anguish of my soul
I now devote.—But what are these, this train
Of females in the sable garb of woe
Decently habited? Whence spring their sorrows?
Does some new ruin lord it in the house?
Or haply, if I deem aright, they bring
Oblations to my father's shade, to sooth
The mighty dead. It must be so; for, see,
Electra is among them, my poor sister,
Pre-eminent in grief.—Almighty Jove,
O give me to revenge my father's death,
And shield me with thy favour! Pylades,
Stand we apart concealed, that I may learn
What leads this train of suppliant females hither.

CHORUS.

STRO. 1. This sadly-pensive train to lead,
With hallow'd rites to sooth the dead,
To bear these off'rings to his shrine,
The melancholy task is mine.
And, as from yon' proud walls I take my way,
My cheeks, with many' a sounding blow
Beat by these hands, in crimson glow,
Whilst my poor heart to anguish sinks a prey;
And the fair texture of this vest,

O nature, in the bad how great an ill!
But in the virtuous strong thy pow'r to save.
See, she hath shorn the extremity of her locks,
Anxious of beauty, the same woman still. EURIP. Elect.

That decent o'er my swelling bosom roll'd,
My griefs thro' ev'ry waving fold
Have rent, and bared my bleeding breast.

ANTIS. 1. For in the still and midnight hour,
When darkness aids his hideous pow'r,
Affright, that breathes his vengeance deep,
Haunts with wild dreams the troubled sleep,
That freeze the blood, and raise the bristling hair:
Grim spectre! he with horrid tread
Stalk'd around the curtain'd bed,
And rais'd a yell that pierc'd the tortur'd ear.
Aghast the heav'n-taught prophet stood;
The dead, he cries, the angry dead around
These dreadful notes of vengeance sound,
Dreadful to those that shed their blood.

STRO. 2. With soul-subduing fear appall'd
Me this unholy woman call'd,
To bear these gifts, this train to lead,
And sooth to peace the mighty dead.
But will these gifts be grateful to his shade?
O Earth, when once the gushing blood
Hath on thy purple bosom flow'd,
What grateful expiation shall be made?
Ill-fated house, thy master slain,
How are thy glories vanish'd! O'er thy walls
A joyless sunless darkness falls,
And horror holds his hateful reign.

ANTIS. 2. Round him the blaze of greatness shone,
And dignity adorn'd his throne:
The people bow'd before their lord,
Awe-struck, and his high state ador'd.
Where now that reverend awe, that sacred dread
Of majesty? Success, to thee,
As to a God, men bend the knee.

But justice hastes t' avenge each impious deed;
Some in day's clear and open light,
Some in the dusky evening's twilight shade
Or by delay more furious made,
Some in the dreary gloom of night.

EPOD. His blood, that sunk upon the ground
A stiffen'd mass of carnage lies,
Aloud for vengeance on his murderers cries:
Ate obeys the call; but slow
Delays, till dreary night inclose them round,
Prepar'd to strike a deeper blow.
Shall he, that foul with midnight rape
Pollutes the nuptial bed, escape?
Murder and lust! Were all the streams, that wind
Their mazy progress to the main,
To cleanse this odious stain in one combin'd,
The streams combin'd wou'd flow in vain.
Me, from my bleeding country torn,
Condemn'd the servile yoke to bear,
Bitter constraint and spirit-sinking fear
Compel t' obey their proud commands;
Just, or unjust, perforce they must be born;
Captive, my life is in their hands:
Perforce my struggling soul conceals its hate;
My vest forbids the starting tear to flow;
Mourning the mighty chief's unhappy fate
Silent I stand, and stiffen with my woe.

ELEC. Ye captive females, to whose care this house
Owes what it has of order, since with me
You here are present on these suppliant rites
Attendant, show, instruct me, as I pour
These solemn off'rings on the tomb, what words
Of gracious potency shall I pronounce?
Or how invoke my father? Shall I say

" To her lov'd lord the loving wife hath sent
" These presents?" Shame forbids: nor hath my tongue
Ought of address, whilst on my father's tomb
I offer these atonements. Shou'd I rather,
As nature prompts, entreat him to return
Like garlands to the senders, meet reward
For their ill deeds? Or with inglorious silence,
For so he perish'd, on the thirsty earth
Pour these libations, then retire, like one
That in some worthless vessel throws away
Something unclean, and casts the vessel with it,
Nor backwards turns her eyes. Instruct me, friends,
Advise me, for alike we hate this house;
Be open then; here you have none to fear,
The free escapes not fate, more than the wretch
That trembles at his proud lord's tyrannous hand.
If thou hast ought of counsel, give it me.

CHOR. Since, as some hallow'd shrine, thy father's tomb
I reverence, at thy bidding I will speak.

ELEC. I charge thee, by that reverence, freely speak.

CHOR. With these libations pour thy ardent vows
For blessings on the head of all his friends.

ELEC. Whom by that honour'd title shall I name?

CHOR. Thyself the first, and all that hate Ægisthus.

ELEC. For thee and me then shall I pour these vows?

CHOR. To learn, and weigh this well, be thy concern.

ELEC. Whom to this friendly number shall I add?

CHOR. Tho' distant far, remember poor Orestes.

ELEC. That's well: I learn no little wisdom from thee.

CHOR. Remember next the authors of his death.

ELEC. What shou'd I say? Instruct my lack of knowledge.

CHOR. Pray that some God, or man, may come to them.

ELEC. With what intent? To judge, or to avenge?

CHOR. Speak plainly, to repay them death for death.

ELEC. And may this be with reverence to the Gods?
CHOR. What hinders to requite a foe with ill?

ELECTRA *at the tomb.*

O thou, that to the realms beneath the earth
Guidest the dead, be present, Mercury,
And tell me that the pow'rs, whose solemn sway
Extends o'er those dark regions, hear my vows;
Tell me that o'er my father's house they roll
Their awful eyes, and o'er this earth, that bears
And fosters all, rich in their various fruits.
And thee, my father, pouring from this vase
Libations to thy shade, on thee I call,
O pity me, pity my dear Orestes,
That in this seat of kings our hands may hold
The golden reins of pow'r: for now oppress'd,
And harass'd by a mother's cruel hand,
Who for Ægisthus, that contriv'd thy death,
Exchang'd her royal lord, he wanders far,
And I am treated as a slave: Orestes
From his possessions exil'd, they with pride
Wantonly revel in the wealth thy toils
Procur'd: O grant Orestes may return,
And fortune be his guide! Hear me, my father,
And grant me, more than e'er my mother knew,
The grace and blush of unstain'd modesty *,
And a more holy hand! For us these vows;

* The Chorus, as more experienced through their age, had instructed Electra how to address the shade of her father, to pour her first vows for blessings on herself and her friends, and particularly to remember Orestes. As he was dearest to her heart, she soon forgets herself; and her warmest vows are for his happy return; then, recurring to what particularly concerns herself, she prays, not for a restoration to her princely rank, but for the virtues becoming her sex, that she may be much more modest than her mother, and her hand more holy. Propriety of character is one of the great excellencies of Æschylus, of which this is a very delicate instance.

But on our foes may thy avenger rise
Demanding blood for blood. These vows I breathe
In dreadful imprecations on their heads.
Be thou to us, my father, with the Gods,
This earth, and pow'rful justice, be to us,
That breathe this vital air, a guide to good.
With these libations such the vows I offer.
Now let your sorrows flow; attune the Pæan,
And sooth his shade with solemn harmony.

CHOR. Swell the warbling voice of woe,
Loudly let the measures flow;
And ever and anon the sorrowing tear
Trickling dew the hallow'd ground,
T' avert the ills we fear;
Whilst on this sepulchral mound
Her pious hands the pure libation shed,
T' atone the mighty dead.
Hear me, O hear me, awful lord,
Thro' the dreary gloom ador'd!
Ha! Who is this*? See, sisters, see,
Mark with what force he shakes his angry lance:
Comes he this ruin'd house to free?
So does some Thracian chief advance;
So Mars, when rous'd with war's alarms,
Radiant all his clashing arms,
Rears high his flaming falchion to the blow,

* The Chorus begins this Pæan to the dead with lamentations for their lost lord; they are proceeding to invoke his aid; but this is scarce mentioned, when they break off with outcries, the prophetic rapture seizes them, and impresses on the imagination the youthful hero in all his radiant arms coming to avenge the death of his father. This is the sublime and daring spirit which distinguishes Æschylus from all other writers. It makes one blush to point out this to the reader; but Mr. Heath has rendered it necessary, who, by understanding this optative not interrogative (as he expresses himself), hath annihilated the beauty and grandeur of the image.

And thunders on the foe.

ELEC. 'Tis finish'd; these libations to my father
The earth has drunk.—Thou awful pow'r, that holdest
'Twixt this ethereal sky and the dark realms
Beneath dread intercourse, What may this mean?
'Tis all amazement. Share this wonder with me.

CHOR. Say what: my throbbing heart has caught th' alarm.

ELEC. Plac'd on the tomb behold these crisped locks.

CHOR. Shorn from a man, or some high-bosom'd dame?

ELEC. 'Tis no hard task to form a strong conjecture.

CHOR. Young tho' thou art, inform my riper age.

ELEC. None here, myself excepted, cou'd devote
His locks, the mournful off'ring ill becomes
Our enemies. Then the colour; mark it well;
'Tis the same shade.

CHOR. With whose; I burn to know.

ELEC. With mine: Compare them: are they not much like?

CHOR. Are they a secret off'ring from Orestes?

ELEC. Mark: they are very like his clust'ring locks.

CHOR. I marvel how he dared to venture hither,

ELEC. Perchance he sent this honour to his father.

CHOR. Nor that less cause of sorrow, if his foot
Must never press his native soil again.

ELEC. A flood of grief o'erwhelms me, and my heart
Is pierc'd with anguish *; from my eyes that view
These locks, fast fall the ceaseless-streaming tears,

* Much good wit hath been thrown away upon this passage, which might well have been spared, had the design of the poet been attended to. No discovery is from hence raised; but the mind of Electra is deeply struck; she reasons, and conjectures, and so is finely prepared for the discovery which soon follows. Aristotle has mentioned this, but in his dryest manner; yet it is plain, that he understood it thus, for he has drawn up the reasoning of Electra into a syllogism in form. But envy and buffoonery are perverse qualities.

Like wint'ry show'rs. To whom besides, that here
Inhabits, cou'd I think these locks belong?
Cou'd she, who slew him, offer on his tomb
Her hair? Alas, her thoughts are impious all,
Such as a daughter dares not name. I deem,
With reason then I deem they graced the head
Of my Orestes, dearest of mankind:
Why shou'd not I indulge the flatt'ring hope?
Ah, had they but a voice, cou'd they but speak
That I no more might fluctuate with these doubts
Perplex'd and troubled; cou'd they plainly tell me
If they were shorn from a foe's hated head,
Or fondly mix their kindred griefs with mine,
A grace and honour to my father's tomb!
But to the Gods, that know what furious storms
Burst o'er me, like a shipwreck'd mariner,
I make appeal: if haply ought of safety
Remains, from this small root the vig'rous trunk
May spread its shelt'ring branches.—Further mark
Th' impression of these feet*; they show that two
Trod here; himself perchance and his attendant;
One of th' exact dimensions with my own.
But all is anguish and perplexity.

ORESTES, PYLADES, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

ORES. In other pressures beg the fav'ring Gods
To hear thy vows, and show'r their blessings on thee.
ELEC. What blessing from them have I now obtain'd?
ORES. Thou seest before thee whom but late thine eyes

* Hoc δεύτερον τεκμήριον plane ridiculum est: Et mirum, quod eruditissimus comicus id non perfuderit aceto suo: Sentiunt omnes, qui aliquid sentiunt.—PAUW.

Pudet hæc opprobria nobis
Aut dici potuisse, aut non potuisse refelli.

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Most wish'd to see.

ELEC. And dost thou know the name,
Which with fond joy my tongue delights to utter?

ORES. Thy fervent vows, I know, are for Orestes.

ELEC. And of those vows what have I yet obtain'd?

ORES. I am Orestes: seek no firmer friend.

ELEC. With wily trains thou wou'dst ensnare me, stranger.

ORES. Then shou'd I spread these trains against myself.

ELEC. But thou wou'dst mock me in my miseries.

ORES. To mock thy miseries were t' insult my own.

ELEC. Am I indeed conversing with Orestes?

ORES. Thou seest me present, yet art slow to know me.
When offer'd on the tomb thou saw'st these locks,
When with thy own th' impressions of my feet
Were measur'd, joy gave wings to expectation,
And imag'd me before thee. Mark these locks,
Shorn from my brother's head; observe them well,
Compare them with thy own. This tissue, view it,
The texture is thy own, the rich embroidery *,
Thine are these figures, by thy curious hand
Imag'd in gold.—Let not thy joy transport thee:

* The ladies, in the simplicity of ancient times, valued themselves much, and indeed were highly esteemed for their skill in embroidery: these rich wrought vests made great part of the wealth of noble houses: Andromache, Helen, and Penelope were celebrated for their fine work, of which Minerva herself was the patroness; and Dido was as excellent as the best of them. As they could not but know what their own hands had wrought, nothing could bring them clearer conviction than a sight of their own curious labours. Orestes was nearly arrived to manhood, when he left, or was driven from Argos; it must therefore be extreme malice, or rival jealousy, which could give this passage so ridiculous a turn as to suppose, that Orestes now wore a vest made for him in his infancy; besides, the word ὕφασμα, as Stanley candidly observes, is a general term; and the reader is left at his liberty to understand by it a belt, or any other piece of embroidery: certainly it was not the vestment of Orestes, for he returned in the habit of a peasant; and it concerned him greatly, that no part of his dress should discover him to Clytemnestra.

Our nearest friends are now our deadliest foes.

ELEC. Thou dearest pledge of this imperial house,
From thee my hopes, water'd with tears, arose:
Thy valour shall support our righteous cause,
And vindicate the glories of thy father.
Pride of my soul, for my fond tongue must speak,
The love my father shared, my mother shared,
Once shared, but justly now my soul abhors her,
And that poor victim my unhappy sister,
Is center'd all in thee: thou art my father,
My mother, sister, my support, my glory,
My only aid: and Heav'n's great King shall prosper
Thy courage, and the justice of the thy cause.

ORES. Look down, great King of Heav'n, look down, behold
These deeds of baseness; see an orphan race,
Reft of the parent eagle*, that, inwreath'd

* A great poet gives every image, every circumstance a peculiar propriety; this does not arise here merely from the allusion to the eagle, which, as the imperial bird, finely characterises the royal Agamemnon; but it here acquires new grace from what the naturalists have told us of the enmity of the eagle to the serpent race, and their frequent battles, some of which ended fatally to the generous bird, as here: Virgil has given us a fine description of one of these battles, wherein the eagle is conqueror,

Utque volans alte raptum cum fulva draconem
Fert aquila, implicuitque pedes, atque unguibus hæsit:
Saucius at serpens sinuosa volumina versat,
Arrectisque horret squamis, et sibilat ore
Arduus insurgens: illa haud minus urget obunco
Luctantem rostro, simul æthera verberat alis. Æn. xi. v. 751.

As when th' imperial eagle soars on high,
And bears some speckled serpent thro' the sky;
While her sharp talons gripe the bleeding prey,
In many a fold her curling volumes play;
Her starting brazen scales with horrid rise,
The sanguine flames flash dreadful from her eyes;

In the dire serpent's spiry volumes, perish'd.
They, unprotected, feel th' oppressive pangs
Of famine, yet too weak to wing their flight,
And, like their parent, fill their nest with prey.
We are the eagle's offspring, of our father
Depriv'd, and driv'n in exile from his house.
Before thy altars, loaded by his hand,
He bow'd with pious reverence: Shou'd thy will
Permit his young to perish, who shall pay thee
Like costly honours? Shou'd the eagle's offspring
Be doom'd to perish, who shall bear thy thunders,
Dread sign of wrath awak'd on mortal man?
Nor will this empire, wither'd from its roots,
Adorn thy altars on the solemn day
With hallow'd victims. Save us then, protect us,
To all its former glories raise this house,
Whose ruin'd tow'rs seem bending to their fall.

CHOR. Ye generous offspring of this royal house,
And guardians of its honour, check your transports;
Lest they are heard, and some incontinent tongue
Bear them to our bad rulers: may these eyes
First see the dark wreaths of their funeral piles.

ORES. The voice of Phœbus never shall deceive:
In dreadful accents utter'd from his shrine
Aloud he charg'd me to defy the danger,
Threat'ning to rack my soul with keenest tortures,
Shou'd I forbear t' avenge my father's death
With equal retribution on his murderer,
That proudly riots in my wasted wealth.
This honour'd shade he charg'd me to avenge,

She writhes, and hisses at her foe, in vain,
Who wings at ease the wide aërial plain;
With her strong hooky beak the captive plies,
And bears the struggling prey, triumphant, thro' the skies.—PITT.

Tho' round enclos'd with evils; to the dead
This triumph o'er their foes the voice declar'd
A lenient joy; to us denouncing ills,
Corrosive leprosies with rankling tooth
To knaw our flesh, and taint our healthful bodies
With ulcerous foulness, changing these fresh locks
T' untimely white; with trains of heavier woes
Rais'd by the Furies from my father's blood,
Who in the realms of night sees this, and bends
His gloomy brows. For the dark shafts, that fly
From those beneath slain by the kindred hand
Of villain baseness, frenzy, and vain fear
That trembles at the shadows of the night,
Rouse, sting, and drive the vice-polluted wretch
With brazen scourges tortur'd thro' the city.
He from the friendly bowl, the hallow'd goblet,
The social intercourse, the incens'd altar
Is chas'd, condemn'd to bear the secret pangs
Of inly-knawing guilt: meanwhile the fiends,
Hatred and Infamy, pursue his steps,
And drag him to an execrable death.
Such was the voice of Phœbus, and demands
My prompt obedience. Cou'd my soul refuse
T' obey the awful mandate, yet the deed
Must be accomplish'd; many urgencies
Conspire; the charges of the Gods, the grief
That wounds me for my father, the fierce pangs
Of penury compel me; and the shame †,

* Æschylus here in brief describes the miserable state of the unexpiated murderer, his interdiction from every altar, every table, and every house; no one holding converse or intercourse with him as polluted and abominable. —Stanley. This indeed was usually the punishment inflicted by the state but the poet here finely ascribes it to the vengeance of the Furies.

† Mr. Heath, who hath given us a specimen of his critical acumen on the

That burns the generous soul, to leave my country,
And all those heroes glorious thro' the world,
Whose conquering arms laid Troy's proud tow'rs in dust,
Slaves to two women; for his soul is woman:
If not, th' occasion soon will prove his spirit.

CHOR. And you, tremendous Destinies, whose pow'r
Is ratified by Jove, mark the firm course
Of justice, and by that direct th' event.
Be th' insults of the hostile tongue repaid
With hostile insults: Justice calls aloud,
Demanding vengeance: let the murd'rous blow,
Requite the murd'rous blow. The solemn voice,
Requiring that oppressive force shou'd feel
Oppressive force, is sanctified by age.

ORES. O thou much injur'd shade, my suffering father,
In thy dear cause what shall I say, what do,
Guided by fortune hither? Where, O where
Is thy couch spread? Our light is shaded o'er
With darkness deep as thine; our youthful graces,
That in this royal house once bloom'd with hope

former part of this speech, observes here, that Orestes cannot be supposed to reckon his own penury among the causes that incite them to revenge his father's death; but his princely generosity was affected at the poverty of those illustrious conquerors who had overturned Troy.—It must indeed have hurt his generous mind to see such men enslaved by a woman, and an effeminate man; this the poet with great judgment observes, but he no where says that their new tyrants had touched the soldiers spoils: he makes Ægisthus say, that he was master of Agamemnon's treasures; and Electra, in her first address to her father's shade, with much indignation says to him,

Orestes,
From his possessions exil'd, they with pride
Wantonly revel in the wealth thy toils
Procured.

And indeed it might be some aggravation to the misfortunes even of a brave prince, to see the shameless usurpers of his possessions wasting his wealth in riot, whilst he was compelled to seek a miserable and precarious subsistence from the charity of others.

Fair opening, shrink at the rough blast of sorrow.

CHOR. No: the devouring flames, my son, that waste
The body of the dead, touch not the soul;
That lives, and knows its destin'd hour to show
Its wrath: yet for the dead our sorrows rise.
Mean while th' oppressor stands a signal mark;
And the just griefs of fathers and of sons
With restless search trace all around for vengeance.

ELEC. Hear me too, O my father; in those griefs
Which at thy sepulchre thy children pour,
I have a mournful part. Thy tomb receives
Alike the suppliant and the exile. Which,
Ah, which of these is well? Which without evils?
No lenient hand can ease our miseries.

CHOR. Yet may the God, that utter'd from the shrine
His awful voice, from these raise other sounds
More pleasing; and for these sepulchral notes,
Notes steep'd in tears, thro' all these royal rooms
The voice of joy may ring, and hail their lord
Return'd to bless them with his kind protection.

ELEC. Yet, O my father, hadst thou greatly fallen
Beneath the walls of Troy, pierc'd by the spear
Of some bold Lycian, leaving to thy house
Thy glory, gracing with illustrious splendor
Thy children's steps, on that barbaric coast
The high-rais'd tomb had dignify'd thy dust,
And sooth'd our sorrows. In the realms beneath
Thy friendly shade, amongst the friendly shades
That fell with honour there, had held its state
Majestic and rever'd, a king, next those
Whose awful pow'r those darksome realms obey.
For to thy last of life thou wast a king,
The golden reins of empire graced thy hands,
And thy strong sceptre ruled a willing people.

But in the fields of Troy thou didst not fall,
Nor is thy tomb beside Scamander's stream
With those that perish'd by the hostile spear.
But, Oh, I wish that they, by whom he fell,
Had first so fall'n; and he, tho' distant far,
Had heard the rumour of their bloody fate,
Secure himself, nor tangled in their snares.

CHOR. Treasures of gold, my child, are poor to this:
Thy words are greater than the greatest fortune,
And all her favours: from thy grief they spring *.
But from this scourge a double clash is heard †;
One from th' assistant pow'rs beneath the earth;
One from those lords, those hated lords that rule us,
Whose rude, unhallow'd hands are stain'd with blood:
This sounds most dreadful to this royal race.

ELEC. This, like a piercing arrow, wounds my soul.

CHOR. Supreme of Gods, send from the realms of night,
The slow-avenging Ate; bid her rise
To blast the fraudful and audacious hands
Of impious mortals: for a father's wrongs
She stamps her vengeance deep. When on this man
The vengeful sword shall fall, and bleeding nigh
Lies this bad woman, be it mine to hear
Their shrieks of death, and answer to their cries
In notes as dismal. Why should I conceal
My honest hopes? Fate spreads her sable wings,
And hovers o'er their heads; before their eyes
Stands indignation arm'd, and hate enrag'd,

* The grief, which Electra expressed for the murder of her father, flowed from a generous and noble spirit: her resentment must therefore be generous and noble.

† This grief is compared to the scourge of the Furies, from whence a double clash is heard; one given by the shade of Agamemnon, ready to assist their revenge; the other by the murderers, which was most to be feared, because their unhallowed hands were prompt to deeds of violence.

Ready to rend their hearts, when Jove shall stretch
His puissant hands. O thou, whose pow'r subdues
The mighty, to this country seal thy faith,
And ratify their doom! On th' impious heads
I ask for vengeance. You, whose dreaded pow'r
Th' infernal realms revere, ye Furies, hear me!
There is a law that, for each drop of blood
Shed on the earth, demands that blood be shed;
For from the slain Erinnys calls for slaughter,
On ruin heaping ruin. Ye dread pow'rs
Of Hell's dark realms, where are you now? Behold,
Ye potent curses of the slain, behold
The poor remains of this imperial house
Sunk in distress, and all its glories vanish'd!
Where, King of Heav'n, where may we seek for refuge?

ELEC. Again my throbbing heart sinks at the sound
Of thy laments; and dark'ning o'er my soul
At thy sad voice comes anguish and despair.
But when thy words breathe courage, my sick griefs
Are fled, and fairer fortune seems to smile.
But with what words to woo her? Speak aloud
The miseries which we suffer from our parents?
Or smooth our tongues to glozing courtesy?
That softens not our miseries: and our spirits,
Rous'd by the wrongs of our ungentle mother,
Contract a wolfish fierceness. With bold hand
She struck the stroke*, bold as the Cissian dame

* Mr. Heath acutely observes, that the true sense of this passage hath escaped the sagacity of all the interpreters, who have been led into their error by uniformly taking it as referring to the murder of Agamemnon; whereas, in truth, it relates solely to poor Electra, whose ears had been soundly boxed by her mother; and the words are to be rendered thus, "She struck a martial stroke (meaning the first box on the ear she gave her daughter, as the signal of battle), then might you see many cuffs often repeated, her hand

Train'd to the warrior's arms. She struck him once;
Again she struck him; her uplifted hands
Redoubled blow on blow; swift on his head
The distant-sounding strokes with steep force fell.
Bold, unrelenting woman, that cou'd bear
Without one pitying sigh t' entomb the king
Unhonour'd with his people's grief, the husband
Without a tear to grace his obsequies.

ORES. All thou hast mentioned are indignities
That swell my grief to rage. But vengeance arms
This hand, assisted by the Gods, to punish
The ignominious wrongs done to my father.
May this revenge be mine, then let me die!

ELEC. When she had kill'd, with barbarous hands she mangled *
His manly figure, and with this abuse

" twisted in my hair, after the manner of a Cissian female warrior."—Spirit of Pauw, be this an atonement for all the insults heaped upon thee!

The design of Electra here is to excite her brother to avenge the murder of their father; and we shall perceive, that this is finely carried on. Upon the accidental mention of " fairer fortune," she says, how shall we obtain it? by speaking our griefs aloud, or by flattering our mother? but they admit no softening, nor can we ever think of her with any degree of tenderness: she struck the bloody stroke, she repeated it on his unhappy head with all the fierceness of a Cissian Virago; then she buried him without his honours.

Orestes answers precisely to this, that vengeance, by the assistance of the Gods, and by his hand, would inflict punishment for this wrong done to his father; but as he shows himself affected at the revenge to be executed, Electra proceeds to give him an account of the indignities offered to the dead body.

* To mangle a dead body was more horrid than the act of murder itself, as it made the names of the deceased a dishonourable spectacle among the shades below, where they were thought to retain these disfiguring mutilations, and were of course disabled from any acts of vengeance. Plato built a fanciful philosophy on this opinion, of which Virgil knew how to make the true poetic use, when he describes Eriphyle pointing to the wound of her son,

Mæstamque Eriphylen
Crudelis nati monstrantem vulnera cernit.

The figure of Deiphobus is represented under the same idea.

Entomb'd him here, studious to make his murder
A deed of horror, that thro' all thy life
Might shock thy soul. Such was thy father's death,
Such were thy father's ignominious wrongs.
But me, a poor, deserted, worthless thing *,
Spurn'd like a mischievous cur from my apartments,
They bid be gone: there I could heave the sigh
In secret, there indulge the mournful pleasure
To pour the tear unnotic'd and uncheck'd,
Hear this, and on thy mind imprint it deep,
Engrave it on the tablet of thy heart;
Be resolute, and calm. These things are thus;
Know this, and let thine indignation rise:
The time demands a firm, determin'd spirit.
And thou, my father, hear: on thee I call,
And with a friendly voice, tho' choak'd with tears,
Hear us, and aid!

CHOR. And with a friendly voice this social train
To her sad voice accords the strain.
Hear, mighty spirit, and from the realms of night
Revisit this ethereal light;
Against thy foes impart thy aid,
Be war with war, and blood with blood repaid!
Ye Gods, with justice strike the blow!
I tremble, as the measures flow;
But Fate attends, and hears our call,
And, stern the bloody forfeit to demand,
With fury arms the kindred hand,

* Electra, having given a relation of the injuries and dishonours done to her father, now proceeds to the ill treatment which she had herself received. Virgins had an honourable apartment in the house assigned them, the chaste reserve of ancient manners requiring this separation from the familiarity, and even the eyes of men: Electra was not admitted to this, but like a mischievous cur turned into the court, and contemptuously neglected: this was the utmost indignity.

And bids the righteous Vengeance fall.
Here sorrow holds her dismal state,
Unsated murder stains the ground,
Revenge behind and Terror wait,
And Desolation stalks his round;
Not with a distant foe the war to wage,
But on this house to pour their rage.
These are the strains, that to the Gods below,
Th' avenging Gods, in rude notes flow:
Hear us, dread pow'rs; and this imperial race,
Victorious in your might, with glory grace!

ORES. My royal father, who unroyally
Wast murder'd, give me to command thy house!

ELEC. Hear me, my father, for I want thy aid;
Grant me to share his vengeance on Ægisthus,
And then escape; so may the solemn feast
Be spread to thee; else when the grateful odours
Are wafted from the festive board, to grace
The mighty dead, thy shade must want its honours.
To thee this hand shall bring the costliest off'rings,
To thee shall consecrate whate'er of wealth
Ought, from thy treasures, to adorn my nuptials*;
And with the holiest reverence grace thy tomb.

ORES. Earth, send my father to behold the combat!

ELEC. Inspire him, Proserpine, with glorious force!

ORES. Think on the bath were thou wast murder'd, father!

ELEC. Think on the net in which they murder'd thee!

ORES. Toils, other than of brass, entangle thee.

ELEC. Th' inexplicable robe's accurs'd contrivance.

* Affection to her father peculiarly marks the character of Electra, of which she could not give a stronger instance than this. Deprived as she now was of all her share of her father's riches, she had it not in her power to offer any presents at his tomb; but should Ægisthus be slain, she devotes even her nuptial dowery to that purpose.

ORES. My father, cannot these dishonours raise thee?
ELEC. Dost thou not raise thy honour'd head? O send
Justice to aid thy friends: or if thy soul
Sinks with its wrongs, nor rises to revenge them,
Be the like sufferings ours! But, O my father,
Hear our last cries, and sitting on thy tomb
Behold thy children: pity my weak sex,
Pity his manly sorrow, nor extinguish
Th' illustrious line of Pelops: so in death
Thou dost not die; for children, when the tomb
Demands the parent, with surviving glory
Preserve his fame; the corks that buoy the line,
And save the net from sinking to the bottom.
O hear us; for thy sake we pour these plaints.
Thou shalt preserve thy glory, if with honour
Thou hear our words, our blameless words, that honour
The fortune of thy tomb, else unlamented!—
Now, brother, since thy soul is rous'd to dare
This deed, trust on the God, and do it straight.
ORES. I shall: but let me pause awhile to ask
Wherefore she sent these off'rings, on what motive
Thus late she sooths th' immedicable ill,
Paying this wretched honour to the dead
That cares not for it. What these presents mean
Surpasses my conjecture, but her crime
Outweighs their worth; for all, that can be offer'd
T' atone for one man's blood, is spent it vain.
Yet, if you know, explain her motives to me.
HOR. I know, for I was present: Dreams and visions,
The terrors of the night, appall'd her soul;
Her guilty fears urg'd her to send these off'rings.
RES. Told she the dreams, that so alarm'd her fears?
HOR. She fancied she had giv'n a dragon birth.
RES. And what was the event? Tell me in brief.

CHOR. This new-born dragon, like an infant child,
Laid in the cradle seem'd in want of food;
And in her dream she held it to her breast.
ORES. Without a wound 'scaped she the hideous monster?
CHOR. The milk he drew was mix'd with clotted blood.
ORES. 'Tis not for nought this vision from her husband.
CHOR. She cry'd out in her sleep with the affright;
And many lamps, dim-gleaming thro' the darkness,
To do her pleasure enter'd the apartment.
Soon to the tomb she sends these funeral honours,
Medicinal, as she hopes, to heal her ills.
ORES. But to this earth, and to my father's tomb
I make my supplications, that in me
Her dream may be accomplish'd; and I judge
It aptly corresponds: for as this serpent,
Leaving the place that once was mine, and laid
Swath'd like an infant, seiz'd that breast which nurs'd
My tender age, and mingled with the milk
Drew clotted blood; and as with the affright
She call'd out in her sleep; it cannot be
But, as she nurs'd this monster, she must die
A violent death *; and with a dragon's rage

* Orestes shows throughout some marks of tenderness for his mother, and a reluctance to shed her blood. When Electra had urged him to do the deed instantly, he pauses a while to ask for what cause Clytemnestra had sent these oblations to the tomb; being told that she was affrighted with portentous dreams, he particularly inquires what they were. The vision is finely and strongly conceived: he takes it as a prodigy sent from the Gods to confirm his resolution, he catches fire from it, and declares

She must die
A violent death: and with a dragon's rage
This hand shall kill her.

The spirit and beauty of the original is inimitable,

Δεῖ τοινὺν, ὡς ἔδρεχεν ἐκπαγλον τέρας,
Θανεῖν βιαίως: ἐκδρακοντωθεὶς δ' ἐγὼ
Κτενῶ νιν.

This hand shall kill her, as her dream declares.
Or how wilt thou expound these prodigies?

CHOR. Thus may it be. But now instruct thy friends
What each must singly do, and each not do.

ORES. Few words suffice: then mark me: Let HER enter;
And keep, I charge thee, keep my purpose secret;
That they, who slew an honourable man
By curs'd deceit, may by deceit be caught
In the same snare, and perish; so the God,
Pow'rful Apollo, from whose sacred voice
Nothing but truth can flow, admonish'd me,
I, like a stranger, harness'd in this coarse
And way-worn garb, with Pylades my friend,
Will as a guest and friend knock at the gate:
Our tongues shall imitate the rustic accent
Familiar to the mountain-race of Phocis *.
Nor will the servants, 'tis a villainous house,
Receive us cheerfully; but as we are,
There shall we stand; while each, that passes by,
With shrewd remarks shall shake his head, and say
Why are these strangers thus inhospitably
Excluded from the gates, if their arrival
Ægisthus knows 'midst his domestic train?
But if I pass the threshold of the gates,
And find him seated on my father's throne,
Or shou'd he come t' accost me, be assur'd
Quick as the eye can glance, e'er he can say
Whence is this stranger? my impatient sword

* Clytemnestra had told Agamemnon that Strophius king of Phocæa had taken Orestes under his protection from any dangers or disturbances that might arise in the state: the young prince had indeed the good fortune to escape from his mother, and was hospitably received at Phocis, from whence he now returned in disguise, attended by Pylades the son of Strophius, whose friendship was so faithful to Orestes in all his distresses, that it became proverbial.

Shall strike him dead. So shall the fell Erinnys,
That with an horrid joy riots in slaughter,
Quaff this third bowl of blood.—Go then, Electra,
Be watchful; see that all things in the house
Be well dispos'd. And you, I charge you guard
Your tongues; be silent where you ought, and where
Your voice can aid me, speak. The rest my friend,
That guides my sword to vengeance, will o'ersee.

CHORUS.

STRO. 1. Pregnant with ills the dreary air
Gives sickness, pain, and terror birth:
The seas, that wind around the earth,
Fatal to man their hideous monsters bear:
Each forest in its shaggy sides,
That darkens o'er the perilous ground,
The lurking, rav'nous savage hides,
Whilst fierce birds wheel the summits round:
And mark with what tempestuous rage
Black from the skies the rushing winds engage.

ANTIS. 1. But who the dangerous thoughts can tell
That in a man's daring bosom roll;
Or whirl the more tempestuous soul
Of woman, when the tyrant passions swell?
When love, to torment near allied,
Bids frenzy rule the troubled hour?
Love, that exerts with wanton pride
O'er female hearts despotic pow'r;
And binds in his ungentle chain
Each savage of the wood, each monster of the main.

STRO. 2. Think with what sullen frenzy fir'd
The Thestian dame with ruthless hand *

* When Althea, the daughter of Thestius, was delivered of Meleager, the Destinies attended at her labour, and upon the birth of the child, throwing a

Cast on the hearth the fatal brand;
The flames consum'd it, and her son expir'd.
With horror think on Scylla's deed*:
To win the favour of the foes,
The golden bracelets were the meed,
Against her father's life she rose,
Approach'd the sleeping monarch's bed,
And reft the sacred honours of his head.

ANTIS. 2. Amongst these deeds of blood, that stain
The annals of the times of old,
Be that unhallow'd couch enroll'd,
Whose guilty loves this royal house profane.
Enroll'd be all that female hate
Form'd 'gainst the chief in arms renown'd;
The chief, whose glorious, awful state
Foes 'midst their rage with reverence own'd:
Those glories, tho' they blaze no more,
Quench'd by a woman's hand, I still adore.

EPOD. In the black annals of far distant time
The Lesbian dames recorded stand†;

log on the fire as they spun his thread of life, pronounced this charm, "O "new-born child, we assign the same period of existence to this log and to "thee;" then vanished. Althea snatched the log from the flames, and preserved it with great care, till Meleager having slain her two brothers, for rudely taking the head of the Calydonian boar from Atalanta, to whom he had presented it, this unnatural mother threw the fatal brand into the fire, and the charm of the Destinies was fulfilled. This story is told by Ovid, Met. l. 8.

* This story is also told by Ovid, ibid. Minos, the celebrated king of Crete, was besieging Alcathoe, where Nisus reigned, on whose head grew a lock of purple hair, on which the safety of the city depended. Scylla, a daughter of Nisus, in love with the Cretan king, as Ovid relates it, or bribed with some female gewgaws according to Æschylus, entered her father's apartment as he lay asleep, and cut off this charmed lock. The city was immediately taken.

† This is a very tragical tale. All the men of Lemnos that were able to bear arms, had invaded Thrace, and continued the war three years: their

But the soul shudders at the crime,
And execrates the murders of their hand:
Basely at once the husbands bleed;
Th' indignant Gods abhor the deed.
And shall man dare with impious voice t' approve
Deeds, that offend the pow'rs above?
Thro' the gored breast
With rage imprest
The sword of justice hews the dreadful wound;
And haughty might
That mocks at right,
Like the vile dust is trampled on the ground.
Righteous are thy decrees, eternal King,
And from the roots of justice spring:
These shall strike deep, and flourish wide,
Whilst all, that scorn them, perish in their pride.
Fate the portentous sword prepares,
And the rough labours of the anvil shares;
Wide thro' the house a tide of blood
Flows where a former tide had flow'd;
Erinnys marks the destin'd hour,
Vengeful her meditated rage to pour.

ORES. What, does no servant hear me knock? Within
Who waits? Again I knock: Does no one hear?
A third time to the servants of this house
I call, if to the stranger at his gate
The great Ægisthus bears a courteous soul.

SERV. Forbear, I hear. Who art thou, and from whence?

ORES. Go tell the lords of this fair house, to them
I come, charg'd with strange tidings: haste;

wives, stung with rage and jealousy, formed an horrid design, which they executed the very night on which their husbands returned, to murder every male on the island. Hypsipyle alone saved her father Thoas. Statius has related the whole transaction with his usual spirit. Theb. v. l. 70.

For now the sable chariot of the night
Rolls on apace; and the dark hour exhorts
The way-spent traveller to repose beneath
The hospitable roof. Call forth the matron,
That has the charge of these domestic cares;
More decent, if a man; for modesty
There checks the falt'ring tongue, but to a man
More confident a man speaks free and open.

CLYTEMNESTRA, ORESTES, PYLADES, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

CLYT. Speak, strangers, what your wants *; here shall you find
All that becomes an house like this; warm baths
Refreshment of your toils, the well spread couch
Inviting soft repose, and over all
An eye regarding justice. If your business
Be of more serious import, asking counsel,
The province this of men; we will inform them.

ORES. A Phocian am I, from the town of Daulis †.
Occasions of my own call'd me to Argos,
Nor ask'd a better dress, than this coarse garb
Familiar to me: onwards as I travell'd
I met a man unknown, myself to him
Unknown; he courteous question'd me how far
I journey'd, and inform'd me of my way,

* Hospitality was so highly regarded, that it was amongst the most honourable of the labours of their greatest heroes to punish those who offered insults to strangers: so that it was not beneath the dignity of Clytemnestra in person to invite these travellers into her house; she even takes a pride in recounting the magnificence with which they should be entertained.

† This speech conceals the greatest art under an apparent simplicity; Orestes appears as a rustic Phocian, and unacquainted with the person of the king; of course he must be supposed to be a stranger to the transactions of that court, and the real history of Orestes; this prevents all suspicion: the same affected simplicity and innocence is preserved in his next speech.

Strophius of Phocis, so I chanc'd to learn;
Stranger, says he, since business of thy own
Leads thee to Argos, let me charge thy honour
To tell his parents that the young Orestes
Is dead. Forget it not. Whether his friends
With solemn obsequies will fetch him hence,
Or in eternal rest our friendly earth
Shall lay him in her hospitable bosom,
Bring back their pleasure; for the brazen urn
Now holds the ashes of the honour'd youth,
Whom we lament. This, faithful to my charge,
Have I deliver'd; if to kindred ears,
And those, whose pow'r is sovereign here, I know not.
But it is meet that his parent knew the event.

ELEC. Ah me! Thus desolation on our head *
Is fall'n. O thou relentless curse, whose rage
Hung o'er this house, has thy unsparing eye
Mark'd what we lodg'd at distance, aiming there
Thy cruel shafts, to rob me of my friends?
E'en now Orestes, who with cautious tread
Had from this gulf of ruin freed his foot,
E'en he, the hope medicinal to the madness
Of this ill house, shows that our hope betrays us.

ORES. It were my wish to have borne other tidings,
More welcome to the lords of this fair mansion,
And meriting their hospitable favours:
For what more strongly to benevolence

* Electra's affection for her brother induces her to attend Clytemnestra: on hearing the feigned account of his death, she breaks into a formal exclamation on the curse of Thyestes, proper enough as she was circumstanced; but what nature would not have dictated had her grief been real: she cautiously avoids asking the strangers any question, and even leads the queen from making inquiries, by expressing a fondness for her brother, and throwing out a severe reflection, which she had reason to think would give great offence, and so shorten the conversation.

Can bind the grateful soul ? Yet I shou'd deem it
An impious wrong not to disclose e'en these,
Unwelcome, as they must be, to his friends,
So solemnly entrusted to my charge.

CLYT. Not less for this shalt thou receive such usage
As thy worth challenges: not less for this
Respected here: another wou'd have come
Charg'd with the same sad message. But the hour
Demands refreshment for the stranger, spent
With the long travel of the weary day.
Lead him to those apartments, where the men
Are well receiv'd; let his attendant follow,
His fellow traveller; let thy diligent care,
I charge thee, minister to all his wants.
We to the rulers of this house will bear
These tidings, and amongst our friends consult
What measures in this sad event to form.

CHORUS, *alone.*

Now, my dear partners, slaves to this proud house,
Now let us show our fortitude, now teach
Our tongues a noble daring for Orestes.

Thou hallow'd earth, thou hallow'd mound,
Whose high sepulchral round
Lies on the royal chief, that o'er the main
To glory led his martial train,
Now hear us, now impart your aid:
On this important hour,
Persuasion, try thy fraudful pow'r:
And thou, thro' night's surrounding shade,
Come Mercury, from the shades below,
And when the falchion flames, direct th' avenging blow!

SERVANT, GILISSA, CHORUS.

SERV. This stranger, it shou'd seem, brings mournful tidings;

I see the tear steal from Gilissa's eye,
Nurse of Orestes. Wherefore dost thou pass
These doors? The sorrows, that attend thy steps,
Shall here find no reward: expect it not.

GILIS. My royal mistress order'd me with speed
To call Ægisthus to these stranger guests;
That man from man he with more certainty
Might learn this fresh report. Before the servants
She kept her smile beneath a mournful eye,
To hide her joy at this event; to her
A joy indeed, but to this house a tale
Of deep affliction. He too, when he hears
The narrative, will from his soul rejoice.
Ah me! what sorrows in successive train
Have in this house of Atreus pierc'd my soul
From ancient times: but never have I suffer'd
A loss like this: with patience other ills,
Well as I might, I bore. But my Orestes
Was the dear object of my anxious thoughts;
An infant I receiv'd him from his mother;
I nurs'd him, many a night to all his wants,
To all his cries attentive, with a care
That now avails me not: E'er reason dawns,
The nurse's care is needful; in his cradle
The infant knows not to express his wants,
Rise they from thirst, or hunger, or the calls
Of nature: with fond diligence I mark'd
Th' instinctive cry, nor with a squeamish niceness
Thought scorn of any office; for my love
Made all delightful. Now, unhappy me!
My dear Orestes is, I hear, no more.
But I am sent in haste to that vile man,
Whose rank pollution stains this noble house:
With pleasure this report will he receive.

CHOR. With what appointment does she bid him come?
GILIS. Appointment! Let me comprehend thy meaning.
CHOR. If with his train of guards, or unattended.
GILIS. She bids him come attended with his guards.
CHOR. No, tell him not*, this hated lord; but wear
A face of cheerfulness; and urge him hither
Alone, devoid of fear, to be inform'd.
For the mind catches from the messenger
A secret elevation, and bold swell.
GILIS. This news, it seems, is welcome to thy soul.
CHOR. But what if Heav'n's high King redress these ills?
GILIS. How? With Orestes all our hopes are dead.
CHOR. Not all. This needs no prophet to unfold it.
GILIS. Hast thou heard ought disproving this report?
CHOR. Go, bear thy message; do as thou art order'd:
The Gods, whose care this is, will guide th' event.
GILIS. I go, in all observant of thy precepts.

* Orestes had enjoined the Chorus to be silent where they ought, and to speak where their voice might aid him: they had kept themselves near the tomb till they saw him enter the palace; they then advance with an intention of assisting his cause, as occasions should arise: Gilissa soon gave them a very favourable one, which they readily embrace, by conjuring that faithful servant to call forth Ægisthus alone without his guards, which facilitated the enterprise of Orestes; to induce her to this, they were obliged to give her hopes of some favourable event; but though they knew her fidelity, they could not be enough assured of her prudence to trust her with the important secret: had they told her that the person, who appeared under the character of a messenger, had brought tidings that would give her joy, they had discovered too much; they prudently therefore refer her to the power of Jupiter, who might redress these evils: How? replies the nurse; Orestes, our hope, is dead: the answer of the Chorus is so ambiguous, that she could not possibly comprehend it in its full meaning, yet clear enough to induce her to ask whether they had heard any thing that contradicted the report: not to answer this plain question in the negative, was to leave her mind under the impression of hope, and with this she is ordered to carry her message, and leave the event to the Gods: this required some management, and it is finely conducted. A criticism of Mr. Heath has given occasion to this long note.

May what is best come from the fav'ring Gods!

CHORUS.

STRO. Now my righteous pray'r approve,
Father and King of Gods, Olympian Jove!
To thee may I unfold
Such vows, as from the modest and the wise
In the cause of justice rise.
O, may these eyes behold
Her pow'r, ador'd by all, maintain
The glories of her awful reign!
Hear me, monarch of the sky,
Protect him with thy guardian care;
O'er his foes exalt him high,
That lord it in the regal chair!
His ruin'd honours thus restor'd,
With fiercer rage thy vengeance shall be pour'd.

ANTIS. Yok'd to affliction's iron car
This orphan son of a lov'd father spare:
Restrain its headlong force;
And let the rapid wheels, with many a bound
Rolling o'er the rugged ground,
Here stop their painful course.
And you, that guard this royal seat,
Its blazing wealth, its gorgeous state,
Hear, propitious Gods, and save!
Let not the blood of former slain
Fresh returns of vengeance crave;
No more these crimson'd mansions stain:
Slaughter no more from slaughter rise,
If low beneath the righteous sword he lies!

MON. Thou, that hast fix'd thy dreary reign *
Deep in the yawning gulf below,

* Stanley has marked the sense of this passage so precisely, that one is

Yet let him rise, yet view this scene,
Around his gloomy eyeballs throw,
Distinct and clear the vengeance mark,
That threatens from her covert dark!
Thou, son of Maia, come, and with thee lead
Success, that crowns the daring deed:
To form the close and dark design,
Whether th' ambiguous tale thou lov'st to weave,
And throw around the veil of night;
Or bid'st e'en truth itself deceive,
Display'd in all the dazzling blaze of light;
The pow'rs of secresy are thine.
Then shall this pensive female train
These rich oblations pay no more;
No more the melancholy strain,
Tuned to the voice of anguish, pour.
Raptur'd their triumph shall I see,
My friends from ruffian danger free.

surprised to see it afterwards mistaken, but Pauw has said μέγα ναίων τόμιον est orcus: δὸς ἀνδρὰ, i. e. Agamemnonem: ejus umbra rediret domum ut filio adesset. Mr. Heath, who always hath a prurience to quarrel with Pauw quo jure, quâve injuriâ, has discovered that μέγα ναίων τόμιον respicit Apollinem speluncam Delphis insidentem, ἀνδρὰ Orestem. We allow the critic his authorities, that τόμιον is sometimes used to express the cave at Delphos; but we cannot give up the passage cited by Stanley from Pindar. Had Apollo been here intended, we certainly should have heard something of the μαντεύματα τὰ ἐνυδόχρησα. But, says the critic, Agamemnon was dead, nothing remained of him but his ashes and his shade, præter cineres et umbram tenuem, therefore it could not be said of him, that he beheld his house ἱλισθερίως, καὶ λαμπρῶς, καὶ φιλίοις ὄμμασι, but this is said in defiance of Æschylus and all antiquity. Could this learned person have forgot that Darius, who also was ashes and a shade, was addressed as a mighty and magnificent power, δαίμονα μεγαλαυχῆ? Could he have forgot that Orestes had evoked his father to behold the combat; and that Electra had implored Proserpine to give him a glorious force, εὔμορφον κράτος?

And thou, when thy stern part is come, be bold:
Think how in blood thy father roll'd:
And when, "my son, my son," she cries,
To melt thy manly mind with plaintive moan,
Then to her guilty soul recal
Thy murder'd father's dying groan;
And to his angry vengeance let her fall:
Like Perseus turn thy ruthless eye *;
Just to thy friends above, thy friends below,
Aim with applauded rage the destin'd wound;
Great in thy vengeance rush upon the foe,
And strike the murd'rer bleeding to the ground.

ÆGISTHUS, GILISSA, CHORUS.

ÆGIS. This message has a voice, that calls me forth
To learn with more assurance this report,
By certain strangers brought, touching the death
Of young Orestes; most unwelcome this;
And the relation to this house will add
Fresh terror to the fear, whose unheal'd wound
Smarts inwardly and rankles. Shou'd I give
Full credit to this tale, or rather deem it
The idle offspring of these women's fears,
That lightly rose, and will as lightly die?
Tell me, what proof gives credit to this rumour?

GILIS. Indeed we heard it: but go in, examine
These strangers; less regard is due to rumour,
Than to clear information learnt from them.

ÆGIS. I wish to see this stranger, and to ask him
If he himself was present at his death,
Or only speaks from an obscure report.

* The mention of Perseus here obliquely insinuates, that Clytemnestra was as dangerous and dreadful as Medusa, on whom Perseus could not look when he slew her.

Deception finds no easy entrance here.

CHOR. What shou'd I say, eternal King,
Or how begin the strain?
These passions how contain,
That in my throbbing breast tumultuous spring?
O that, in aid, my daring deed
Might all the force of words exceed!
For now distain'd with blood the bick'ring sword
The contest ends; if all
This royal race shall fall;
Or the just laws their ancient state resuming,
And liberty her light reluming,
Hail to his father's rights the son restor'd.
'Gainst two fierce wolves the youth contesting stands *
Alone: May heav'n-sent conquest grace his hands!

ÆGIS. Oh! I am slain. [*within.*

CHOR. That groan! Again that groan!
Whence? What is done? Who rules the storm within?
The deed is finish'd: let us keep aloof,
And seem unconscious of these ills: best stand
At distance, whilst destruction ends her work.

SERV. Woe, woe to me! Woe to my slaughter'd lord!
Woe on my wretched head, and woe again!
Ægisthus is no more. But open here,
Ye females, instantly unbar these doors;
Th' occasion calls for vigour, not t' assist
The slain. Ho, here! What, call I to the deaf?
Or sleep you? Where is Clytemnestra? How
Employed? Her life stands at the sword's bare point,
And ready vengeance seems to prompt the blow.

CLYTEMNESTRA, SERVANT, CHORUS.

CLYT. What means thy clamour? Whence these shrieks of woe?

* The translator readily and thankfully embraces Mr. Heath's fine conjecture here, who for θεὸς proposes to read θῶϊγ.

SERV. They, that were rumour'd dead, have slain the living.
CLYT. Ah me! I understand thee, tho' thy words
Are dark; and we shall perish in the toils,
E'en as we spread them. Give me instantly
The slaught'ring axe; it shall be seen if yet
We know the way to conquer, or are conquer'd:
These daring measures have my wrongs enforc'd.

ORESTES, PYLADES, CLYTEMNESTRA. CHORUS.

ORES. Thee too I seek. He has his righteous meed.
CLYT. Ah me! my dear Ægisthus, thou art dead.
ORES. And dost thou love the man? In the same tomb
Shalt thou be laid, nor e'en in death forsake him.
CLYT. Ah, stay thy hand, my son: my child, my child,
Revere this breast, on which thou oft' hast slept*,
And oft thy infant lips have press'd its milk.
ORES. What shall I do, my Pylades? Restrain'd
By filial reverence, dread to kill my mother?
PYL. Where then the other oracles of Phœbus,
Giv'n from the Pythian shrine? The faithful vows,
The solemn adjurations, whither vanish'd?
Deem all the world thy foes, save the just Gods.
ORES. Thou hast convinc'd me; thy reproofs are just.—
Follow him; on his body will I slay thee.
Alive thou held'st him dearer than my father;
Then sleep with him in death, since thou cou'dst love him,
And hate the man who most deserv'd thy love.

* Orestes afterwards in his own vindication pleads thus to the father of Clytemnestra,

Should wives with ruffian boldness kill their husbands,
Then fly for refuge to their sons, and think,
Baring their breasts, to captivate their pity,
These deeds would pass for trivial, as their mood,
For something or for nothing, shall incline them. EURIP. Elect.

CLYT. I nurs'd thy youth, and wish to tend thy age.
ORES. What, shall my father's murd'rer dwell with me?
CLYT. The Fates, my son, the Fates decreed his death.
ORES. And the same Fates decree that thou shalt die.
CLYT. Dost thou not dread a mother's curse, my son?
ORES. That mother cast me out to want and misery.
CLYT. Not so; I sent thee to a friendly house.
ORES. Tho' nobly born, a slave, and doubly sold.
CLYT. What in exchange, what price did I receive?
ORES. I blush to charge thee with the guilty price.
CLYT. Blush not; but with it name thy father's lightness.
ORES. Sitting in wanton ease, blame not his toils.
CLYT. Barr'd from our husbands, irksome are our hours.
ORES. Yet in your ease your husbands' toils support you.
CLYT. My son, my son, thou wilt not kill thy mother!
ORES. Thy hand, not mine, is guilty of thy death.
CLYT. Take heed; avoid a mother's angry Furies.
ORES. Relaxing here, how shall I 'scape my father's?
CLYT. Methinks while yet alive before my tomb
I pour the funeral strain, that nought avails me.
ORES. Nought: for my father's fate ordains thy death.
CLYT. Ah me! I gave this dragon birth, I nurs'd him:
These terrors of the night were more than phantoms.
ORES. Foul and unnatural was thy murd'rous deed:
Foul and unnatural be thy punishment.
CHOR. The double ruin e'en of these awakes [*alone.*
Our grief. But since his cruel fate has plung'd
Orestes deep in blood, pour we the pray'r
That his fair day set not in endless night.
STRO. Revenge at length is come, tho' slow her pace,
For Priam's ruin'd race.
In Agamemnon's royal hall,
Rous'd by the Pythian God's inspiring call,

The glorious exile stands;
With lion port, with martial mein,
Such as the God of war is seen,
The sword of justice light'ning in his hands,
Fir'd by the prompting voice divine,
That thunder'd from the shrine,
Dauntless he dared these dang'rous courts to tread,
Hark! 'tis his voice: the walls around
His cheerful shouts resound:
No more the tyrant's malice shall he dread;
The tyrants' lavish hands no more
Shall waste his treasur'd store;
No more their pride usurp his throne,
Low in the dust their hostile pride o'erthrown.

ANTIS. With dark and secret fraud HIS coward mind
The bloody deed design'd.
Revenge, with solemn steps and slow
Advancing, meditates the secret blow;
Daughter of Heav'n's high Lord,
Tho' by the name of Justice known
Her sovereign pow'r weak mortals own,
She guides his hand, she points his thund'ring sword;
And rushing with impetuous might
Assists him in the fight,
Breathing destructive fury on his foes.
Nor less 'gainst HER whose treach'rous hand
This injur'd house profan'd,
For his deep shrine with fury Phœbus glows.
For e'en the Gods with sacred awe
Revere this righteous law,
To spurn the guilt that asks their aid:
And be this heav'n-commanding law obey'd.

EPOD. Cheerful the light begins to rise.

Sunk was our sun, and long in darkness lay,
Nor promis'd the return of day:
Soon may his beams revisit our sad eyes!
When these cleans'd floors no more retain
Polluting murder's sanguine stain,
Time haply may behold his orient rays
O'er these illumin'd turrets blaze;
And fortune, mounted on her golded seat,
Rejoice in our triumphant state,
Rejoice to see our glories rise,
And our unclouded sun flame o'er the sapphire skies.

ORESTES, CHORUS.

ORES. Behold the proud oppressors of my country,
The murderers of my father, the destroyers
Of his imperial house: commanding awe
When seated on their thrones, retaining yet
Their loves, of their affection if with truth
Hence we conjecture ought, and their oath stands
Inviolate; for to my father's death
They form'd th' unhallow'd compact, and to die
Together: these events confirm their oath.
Behold again, you that attentive mark
These ills, behold this artifice, the toils
That tangled hand and foot my suff'ring father.
This was his vestment, from a ring around it,
Spread it, display it to th' all-seeing sun,
That with his awful eye he may behold
My mother's impious deeds, and in the hour
Of judgment be my witness, that with justice
My vengeance fell on her. As for Ægisthus,
I reck not of his death; a sacred law
He dared pollute; and justly has he paid
The dreadful penalty. She 'gainst her husband,

Once the dear object of her love, to which
Her swelling zone bore many a precious pledge,
Now flam'd with ranc'rous hate, and murd'rous malice.
What noxious monster, what envenom'd viper,
That poisons with a touch th' unwounded body,
E'er breath'd such pestilent and baleful rage?
You view that vestment: tell me now, were all
The pow'rs of language mine, what shou'd I call it?
Toils planted for a savage? Or the bands
That for the tomb enwrap the dead? A curse
Well may you call it, and the gives of Hell.
Such may the pilferer wear, the thievish slave
That pillages his guests, and trains his life
To plunder; such the ruffian, whose rude hand
Prompted to murd'rous deeds is stain'd with blood.
Never, ye gods, may such a woman share
My bed: No, rather childless let me perish!

CHOR. O horror, horror! Dreadful were your deeds,
And dreadful is your death; the ling'ring vengeance
Burst with redoubled force. This was her deed,
Her cursed deed: this vestment is my witness,
Ting'd by Ægisthus' sword; the gushing blood,
Now stiffen'd, stains its tyrian-tinctur'd radiance.
Now I applaud his just revenge; now weep,
Viewing this bloody robe, and mourn these deeds,
The suff'rings of this house, and e'en this conquest,
Dreadful atonement! Never shall the life
Of mortal man be pass'd uncharg'd with ills:
On some with rapid rage the tempest rolls;
Slowly on some the gath'ring clouds advance.

ORES. Be that another's care: I see the doom
Assign'd to me. For as the rapid car
Whirl'd from the course by the impetuous steeds
That scorn the reins, so my exulting heart

Bounds with tumultuous and ungovern'd passions.
Yet let me plead, whilst reason holds its seat,
Plead to my friends, that in the cause of justice
I slew my mother; for her impious hands,
Stain'd with my father's blood, call'd down revenge
From the offended Gods. And here I plead,
To mitigate the deed, the Pythian prophet,
Phœbus, whose voice pronounc'd me from the shrine,
If I achiev'd the vengeance, free from guilt:
To my refusal dreadful was his threat
Of punishments, beyond the reach of thought.
Graced with this branch of olive, and this wreath,
I will approach his shrine, his central throne *,
And his eternal fires, there to be cleans'd
From the pollution of this kindred blood:
No other roof receives me; so the God
Injoin'd. Meanwhile let Argos be inform'd,
And all this people witness, what a weight
Of miseries oppress'd me: dead or living,

* Jupiter, desiring to know the central point of the earth, sent from his throne two eagles of equal wing in opposite directions; they flew round the globe, and met at Delphos, which was therefore called the central seat of Apollo, μεσόμφαλον ἵδρυμα Λοξίου: so the fable. Mythologists, or Etymologists, give a more rational account of the matter: Phurnutus, speaking of the Pythian oracle at Delphos, says, ἐλέχθη δὲ καὶ ὁ τόπος ὀμφαλὸς τῆς γῆς, οὐχ ὡς μεσαίτατος ὢν αὐτῆς, ἀλλ' ἀπὸ τῆς ἀναδεδομένης ἐν αὐτῷ ὀμφῆς, ἥτις ἐστὶ θεία φωνή.—De Nat. Deor. p. 226.—The very ingenious Mr. Bryant will explain this to the English reader. "The term Omphi is of great anti-"quity, and denotes an oracular influence, by which people obtained an insight "into the secrets of futurity. Hence the Ὀμφὴ of the Greeks. For these ora-"cles no place was of greater repute than the hill at Delphi, called Omphi-El, "or the oracle of the sun. But the Greeks perverted these terms in a strange "manner; finding them somewhat similar in sound to a word in their own lan-"guage, their caprice immediately led them to think of Ὀμφαλός, a navel, "which they substituted for the original word, and presuming that Delphi was "the Umbilicus, the centre of the whole earth, invented the idle story of Ju-"piter and the two eagles to support their idle notion."—Analysis. Omphi.

A vagrant, and an exile from my country,
I leave these words behind me; having done
What honour gave in charge, I shall not blush
Hearing my fame reviled, nor bear in absence
The tongue of obloquy, the state of Argos
Freed by this hand, that boldly crush'd these dragons.—
Ha! look, ye female captives, what are these
Vested in sable stoles, of Gorgon aspect,
Their starting locks tangled with knots of vipers!
I fly, I fly; I cannot bear the sight.

CHOR. What phantoms, what unreal shadows thus
Distract thee? Victor in thy father's cause,
To him most dear, start not at fancied terrors.

ORES. These are no phantoms, no unreal shadows;
I know them now; my mother's angry Furies.

CHOR. The blood as yet is fresh upon thy hands,
And thence these terrors sink into thy soul.

ORES. Royal Apollo, how their numbers swell!
And the foul gore drops from their hideous eyes.

CHOR. Within are lavers. Soon as thou shalt reach
His shrine, Phœbus will free thee from these ills.

ORES. And see you nothing there? Look, look! I see them.
Distraction's in the sight: I fly, I fly.

CHOR. Blest may'st thou be: and may the God, whose eye
Looks on thee, guard thee in these dreadful dangers!
Thrice on this royal house the bursting storm
Hath pour'd its rage in blood. Thyestes first
Mourn'd for his slaughter'd sons. Th' imperial lord,
The leader of the martial hosts of Greece,
Next fell beneath the murd'ring sword, and stain'd
Th' ensanguin'd bath. Then came th' intrepid youth
Arm'd with the sword—of Freedom shou'd I say,
Or fate?—How long shall vengeance pour her terrors?
When curb her fiery rage, and sleep in peace?

THE

FURIES.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

THE PYTHIAN PRIESTESS

APOLLO

MINERVA

THE GHOST OF CLYTEMNESTRA

ORESTES

CHORUS, THE FURIES.

THE

FURIES.

It is pleasant enough to observe with what heat the critics rise against this tragedy. C'est si bizarre.—L'unité de lieu n'est pas gardée dans cette pièce: mais ce n'est pas-la qui choque le plus.—Tota œconomia dramatis impia est et inepta.—Hic uno momento tota scenæ facies mutatur, et pro Delphis ac templo Apollinis Delphici habemus Athenas et templum Minervæ Athenis. Nihil ineptius aut inconcinnius excogitari posset.—The poet, it seems, had dared to violate the unities; and further has introduced personages of so extravagant a character as to baffle the skill of these literary martinets, and to whip them from their foining fence; hinc illæ lachrymæ. Æschylus in all his other pieces that remain to us has paid the strictest attention to these favourite unities; and with reason; he was their father, and knew their merit as well as any man: Even here, where his management of the subject led

him to treat them with less respect, he has softened the violation by a kind of magic power: Apollo and the Furies must be allowed the liberty to transport themselves whither and when they please; and Mercury has the charge of conducting Orestes; so that had Horace wrote,

> Ille per extentum Funem mihi posse videtur
> Ire poëta, meum qui pectus inaniter angit,
> Inritat, mulcet, falsis terroribus implet
> Ut magus, et modo me DELPHIS, modo ponit Athenis,

the allusion would have added a wonderful propriety to the expression, and the lines have conveyed a just character of this tragedy. However a French or a Dutch critic may be shocked at this change of scene, to an Athenian nothing could be more agreeable than to see a contest, which Apollo could not compose at Delphos, brought before the great council of his own city, the God in person attending and pleading in the cause. That respect to his country, which distinguishes our noble poet above all the writers of antiquity, has an irresistible charm. "Rules, "art, decorum, all fall before it. It goes directly "to the heart, and gains all purposes at once." The English reader feels this in its full force, and Æschylus is acquitted of the charge of having violated an unity.—As these dreadful sisters were the ministers of the offended Gods, to execute their vengeance on impious mortals stained with blood, just, impartial, and of resistless power, they were

held in the highest reverence: as they were cruel, implacable, and delighted with their terrible office, they were detested, and abhorred by Gods and men: this accounts for the very different treatment they here meet with. For the rest, let P. Brumoy be the poet's advocate. "On sent assez que les "traits rude et un peu grossiers de cette pièce sont "fort opposés à notre goût, et au vray goût du "théâtre. Mais il ne faut pas confondre parmi "ces traits, ce qui regarde uniquement les mœurs "et les idées des Grecs. Le ronflement des Fu-"ries, et ce spectacle des monstres difformes, ne "vaut du tout rien. Cependant, comme c'etoient "des Divinités respectable pour les Grecs, ils les "voyoient avec d'autre yeux que nous. A plus "forte raison devoient-ils être moins choqués de "voir Apollon plaider pour Oreste, et Minerve "jouer le rôle qu'elle joue. Tout cela étoit dans "leur genie; et il est nécessaire qu'on s'en rap-"proche autant qu'il est possible, pour ne pas trou-"ver ridicule une tragédie qui ne l'étoit certaine-"ment pas au goût du peuple LE PLUS POLI "DE L'UNIVERS."

Had these critics explained the motives, which induced this venerable court to acquit Orestes, from the laws and usages of ancient times, they would have been better employed: but not a word of this. This curious inquiry was reserved for a writer of a very different genius; and the reader

will thank me for referring him to the notes on the Epistle to the Pisos, v. 127.

This foul sisterhood on the Athenian stage amounted to fifty: the consternation arising from their hideous figures, and gestures, and yellings, had such fatal effects upon the children et les femmes enceintes, that the state by an express law reduced the number of the Chorus to fifteen, and afterwards to twelve. But the translator dares assure the English ladies, for whom he has too great a respect to offer them any thing that can have the least tendency to hurt them, that they may read this play with the utmost safety. These ancient virgins are, to be sure, at first a little wayward, and rather outrageous; but they soften by degrees, till they become perfectly good-humoured, and the best company in the world. He flatters himself that he needs not make any apology for passing so slightly over ces ronflements redoubles des Furies, which are marked with great exactness in the original; nor for an omission of somewhat a similar nature in the last scene of the PERSIANS. He has taken the liberty to change the position of a few lines, where the Furies quit the temple of Apollo: which to him appeared necessary.

THE

FURIES.

SCENE, the VESTIBULE of the TEMPLE of the PYTHIAN APOLLO.

THE PRIESTESS.

WITH reverence first to th' Earth I pay these vows,
The first prophetic pow'r: to Themis next,
Who next her mother held, they say, this seat
Oracular: Titanian Phœbe then,
She too the daughter of the Earth, unforc'd
Assum'd this seat; to Phœbus at his birth
Rich gifts*, in honour of the day, she brought,

* The custom of making presents at the birth of a child is of high antiquity: a passage from the Phormio of Terence is alleged to prove, that the eighth day after the birth, on which the name was given, was esteemed the dies natalis, and that the presents were then offered; but that passage clearly proves, that these gifts were presented on each day.

Porro autem Geta
Ferietur alio munere ubi hera pepererit,
Porro alio autem ubi erit puero natalis dies.

At the birth only some female relations attended as assistants to Lucina, and these came not empty-handed; on the other, the parents entertained their

And grac'd him with her name; the Delian rock,
The lake he left, and anchor'd in the port
Sacred to Pallas: thence to this fair region,
And high Parnassus, held his solemn march:
Attendant on his state the sons of Vulcan *
With reverend awe prepare his way, and tame
The rude and savage earth; the joyful people
Hail his arrival, and the sceptred Delphus,
Lord of this realm, ador'd the passing God:
With his own sacred skill high Jove inspir'd
His raptur'd soul, and placed him on this throne,
The fourth prophetic God, whence now he gives
His father's oracles: To these I raise
My first-breath'd vows. Nor less Pronæan Pallas †

friends at a feast, the sacra repotia patrum, and the guests were liberal in their presents to the mother: in this sense probably we are to understand Homer, who says, that Delos upon the birth of Apollo was loaded with gold,

χρυσῷ, δ' ἄρα Δῆλος ἅπασα
Βεβρίθει, καθορῶσα Διὸς Λητοῦς τε γενέθλην.

Hym. in Apoll. v. 135.

* By the sons of Vulcan the Scholiast understands the Athenians, and tells us, that Theseus cleared the way of robbers: for which he is justly reproved by Pauw; for how came the Athenians to be sons of Vulcan? he then recommends it to us to look in some dark corner, if haply something may there lie hid which may give light to this passage. Apollo found the country around Parnassus rocky and barren,

Οὔτε τρυγηφορὸς, ἧδεν' ἱκήρατος, οὔτ' εὐλείμων,
Ὥς τ' ἀπό τ' εὖ ζώειν καὶ ἅμ' ἀνθρώποισιν ἐπηδεῖν.

Hym. in Apoll. v. 529.

To cultivate this country, and to introduce the arts of polished life, was a work worthy of Apollo, and we find that it was soon done: as Vulcan was the God of fire, "which lends its aid to every art," the workmen in the finer arts may properly be called his sons. Probably no deeper mystery lies here concealed.

It appears from Callimachus and Pausanias, that Minerva had a shrine before the temple at Delphos: hence her title Pronaia.—STANLEY.

Demands her meed of praise. Next I adore
The nymphs, that in Corycia's cavern'd rocks*,
Lov'd haunt of soaring birds, in rustic state
Have fix'd their residence; tho' Bacchus claims †
The rude domain: my memory now recals
With what a port he led his raging nymphs
To havoc, when devoted Pentheus fled
Affrighted, as an hare, before his hunters.
The fountains next of Plistus, and the pow'r
Of Neptune I invoke ‡: and lastly thee,
Supreme, all-perfect Jove! These rites perform'd,
As Priestess of the Shrine I reassume
My sacred seat. Frequented as of old
Be this oracular fane; and may the Gods
Grant me auspicious answers: if from Greece
Th' inquirers, pleas'd return they with the Fates!
But my voice utters, what the God inspires.

[She enters the Temple, and returns affrighted.

Things horrible to tell, and horrible
To sight, have forc'd me from the fane again:
Trembling with fear my lax limbs ill support
My frame, save that my hands with eager grasp
Uphold my sinking weakness as I pass.
As to the shrine with many a garland crown'd
I bend my age-enfeebled steps, beneath
The central dome I see a man abhorr'd
By the just Gods, a suppliant it shou'd seem,

* The poet could not with propriety omit the mention of this remarkable cave in the Delphian rock: it was sacred to Pan and the Corycian Nymphs, the daughters of the river Plistus.—Stanley.

† This shows, that the country was now cultivated. The story of Pentheus is the subject of the Bacchæ of Euripides.

‡ Neptune is here invoked, as having formerly been the lord of this country, till he exchanged it for Calauria.—Scholiast.

For such his posture; but his hands are stain'd
With blood; in one he holds a new-drawn sword,
High in the other crown'd with ample wreaths
An olive branch, with wreaths of snowy wool
Handsomely wrought: thus far I speak assur'd.
Before him lies a troop of hideous women
Stretch'd on the seats, and sleeping; yet not women,
But Gorgons rather, nor the Gorgon form
Exactly representing, as I have seen them
Drawn by the painter's imitative pencil,
Snatching the viands from the board of Phineus*.
These have not wings; but cloth'd in sable stoles,
Abhorr'd and execrable; as they sleep
Hoarse in their hollow throats their harsh breath rattles,
And their gall'd eyes a rheumy gore distil.
Ill suit such loathsome weeds the hallow'd fane
Graced with the forms of sculptur'd Gods, ill suit
The roofs of men: so foul a sisterhood
Till now I never saw; no land can boast
To have produc'd a breed so horrible,
But toils, and groans, and mischiefs must ensue.
But here Apollo reigns; his awful pow'r
Guards his own fane, auspicious to disclose
The dark decrees of Fate, to spread the glow
Of vig'rous health, to breathe th' ambrosial gales
And chase from other mansions all that hurts.

The Temple opens.—Apollo is seen.—Orestes as a suppliant.—The Furies in a deep sleep.

APOL. No: I will not forsake thee: to the end

* Phineus was king of Pæonia: being old and blind, and having lost his sons, his daughters, Pyria and Erasia, wasted his wealth in wanton riot: hence the fable, that the Harpyes snatched the viands from his table.—Palæphatus.—It is observable, that the ancients in general, and particularly the elegant Athenians, most commonly represented the vices under the most disgustful forms, and gave the personified virtues the most beautiful and amiable figures.

My guardian care shall favour and assist thee
Present, or distant far: but to thy foes
I know not mercy. See this griesly troop,
Sleep has oppress'd them, and their baffled rage
Shall fail, grim-visag'd hags, grown old
In loath'd virginity: nor God, nor man
Approach'd their bed, nor savage of the wilds;
For they were born for mischiefs, and their haunts
In dreary darkness 'midst the yawning gulfs
Of Tartarus beneath, by men abhorr'd,
And by th' Olympian Gods. Fly then, nor yield
To weak distrust: they, be thou sure, will follow
With unremitting chase thy flying steps
Wide wand'ring o'er the firm terrene, and o'er
The humid sea, and wave-surrounded towns.
But faint thou not, sink not beneath thy toils;
Fly to the city of Minerva, take
Thy suppliant seat, with reverence in thy arms
Grasp her time-honour'd image. Holding there
Concordant counsels, lenient of these ills,
We shall not want the means to heal thy pains,
And ratify thy peace: for at my bidding
Thy sword is purple with thy mother's blood.

ORES. 'Tis not unknown to thee, royal Apollo,
That I have done no deed of base injustice:
This known, forsake not, slight not my just cause:
Strong is thy pow'r, and faithful to defend.

APOL. Remember: let not fear unman thy mind.
And thou, my brother, by our ties of blood,
Our common parent, I adjure thee, Mercury,
Protect him: rightly if the name of guide
Be thine, be thou his guide; defend my suppliant;
For Jove with reverence looks on mortal man,
That awfully reveres our guiding pow'r.

To the FURIES sleeping.

THE GHOST OF CLYTEMNESTRA.

What, can you sleep? Is this a time t' indulge *
Your indolent repose? Thro' your neglect
I am dishonour'd 'mongst the dead, revil'd,
For that I slew him with incessant taunts,
And wander with disgrace: this infamy,
I tell you, is thro' you: my horrid suff'rings,
From those most dear to me, excite no anger
Of one offended God; yet I was slain
By my son's hand. With thy mind's eye behold
These wounds †: in sleep the vig'rous soul, set free
From gross corporeal sense, with keener view
Looks thro' the fate of mortals, dimly seen
Thro' the day's troubled beam. Oft' have ye tasted

* To add to the horror of the scene, the ghost of Clytemnestra appears. She retains in death the fierce and implacable spirit which she possessed alive; here indeed, for the religious principles of the times, she had reason to be anxious for the punishment of Orestes, as without that revenge her shade could not appear with any dignity in the regions below; the death of Hector, and the insults on his body turn on this principle: even the tender and pathetic Virgil puts this sentiment into the mouth of the afflicted Evander, Æneid xi.

Go, friends, this message to your lord relate;
Tell him, that if I bear my bitter fate,
And after Pallas' death live ling'ring on,
'Tis to behold his vengeance for my son.
I stay for Turnus; whose devoted head
Is owing to the living and the dead:
My son and I expect it from his hand;
'Tis all that he can give, or we demand.
Joy is no more: but I would gladly go,
To greet my Pallas with such news below.—DRYDEN.

Accordingly the death of Turnus is a sacrifice to the manes of Pallas,

Pallas te hoc vulnere, Pallas
Immolat, et pœnam scelerato ex sanguine sumit.

† An ill-grounded dogma of the Pythagorean philosophy worse applied.

My temp'rate off'rings mix'd with fragrant honey *,
Grateful libations: oft' the hallow'd feast
Around my hearth, at midnight's solemn hour,
When not a God shar'd in your rites: but this,
All this I see disparag'd now, and scorn'd;
And he is fled, light as the bounding roe,
Burst from your nets, with many a bitter scoff.
Hear me, O hear! 'tis for my soul's repose
I plead: rouse your keen sense, infernal pow'rs,
'Tis Clytemnestra calls you in your dreams.
Deep is your sleep; meanwhile he distant flies:
I ask your aid; else not a suppliant comes
To interrupt your rest: supine you lie
In dead repose, nor pity my afflictions;
Meanwhile Orestes flies: shall he escape,
The murd'rer of his mother? Sound thy sleep,
And loud thy deep-drawn breath. Hast thou e'er done
Ought, but fell deeds of mischief? Rouse, awake:
The terrors of the dragon lose their force,
Quench'd in the dark profound of toil and sleep.

CHOR. Seize him there, seize him, seize him, take good heed. [*asleep.*

CLYT. In dreams dost thou pursue him, like the hound
That opens in his sleep, on th' eager chase
E'en then intent. And is this all? Awake,
Arise: let not thy toil subdue thee; know
What loss ensues if sleep enfeebles thee;
And let these just reproaches sting thy mind,
Incentives to the wise: with fiery breath,
That snuffs the scent of blood, pursue this son,
Follow him, blast him in the prosp'rous chase.

CHOR. Awake, arise: rouse her as I rouse thee. [*awaking.*

* No wine was ever used in the libations to the Furies, therefore called νεφάλιοι σπονδαί. These private and midnight rites to the Furies strongly mark the character of the Clytemnestra.

Yet dost thou sleep? Leave thy repose; arise;
Look we if this firm guard hath been in vain.
Ha, sisters, ha! 'tis base, 'tis foul;
Vain is our labour, vain our care:
This insult stings my tortur'd soul,
Untaught contempt and wrong to bear.
Whilst overpow'r'd with sleep I lay,
Burst from the net escapes the prey.

Great triumph, treach'rous son of Jove,
In youth's fresh prime to mock my age!
Thee cou'd this impious suppliant move
(And thou a God) whose cruel rage
Plung'd in his mother's breast his sword?
Yet thou hast screen'd the wretch abhorr'd.
Clashing her scourge with hideous sound
Reproach upon my slumbers stole;
Deep in my heart impress'd the wound,
E'en yet chill horror shakes my soul.
These are the deeds in misrule's hour
When youthful Gods usurp the pow'r.

See all defil'd with gore thy throne,
There sate the murd'rer dropping blood.
Yet these pollutions are thy own;
From thee the call, the impulse flow'd:
Such grace, despis'd th' age-honour'd Fates*,
Your new unhallow'd shrines awaits.

* Mr. Heath inclines to think, that respect is here had to Themis, whom Apollo drove by force from the Delphic shrine: this learned person had forgot that Phœbe succeeded to Themis without any violence, Θεμιδος, οὐδὲ πρὸς βιαστινὸς, and resigned in favour of Apollo. He has scarce hinted his opinion, but he wavers in it; and from what the Furies afterwards say, that Apollo had crushed the ancient power of the Fates, by deceiving them in the house of Pheres, is induced to believe, that the poet alludes to some fabulous

And shall this wretch in safety breathe,
Screen'd by thy pow'r severe to me;
No: let him fly the earth beneath,
Never, he never shall be free:
No: as he dared this murd'rous deed,
Murder shall fall upon his head*.

APOL. Hence, I command you, from my hallow'd seat
Begone with speed; quit this oracular shrine:
This is no place to snatch your winged serpents,
And hurl them from your golden-twisted string,
To wring the black blood from the human heart
With torture, then disgorge your horrid feast
Of clotted gore: Such guests my house abhors.
Begone where vengeance with terrific rage
Digs out the eyes, or from the mangled trunk
Remorseless rends the head; to slaughters go,
Abortions, lurking ambush, rampir'd force,
To suff'rings, to impalements, where the wretch
Writhes on the stake in tortures, yelling loud
With many a shriek: In feasts like these, ye hags
Abhorr'd, is your delight; sufficient proof
That execrable form: the desert wild,
Where the blood-rav'ning lion makes his den,

tradition, which is lost in the lapse of time. But surely all this perplexity might have been avoided, had this learned person recollected, that the Furies say of themselves, that Fate at their birth had assigned them this office, to pursue the murderer with vengeance till he dies: Apollo therefore, by rescuing Orestes from their power, had despised the age-honoured Fates, and violated their ancient decree.

* Stanley rightly translates this, the sense of which is, Orestes, having been guilty of murder, shall find another equally guilty, who shall requite this on his head. Mr. Heath translates it thus, "since he is now polluted "with blood, he shall draw another pollution, besides that, on his own head:" this he explains as respecting the murder of Pyrrhus by Orestes, and refers us to the Andromache of Euripides. Nothing can be more foreign to the sense of the poet.

Such shou'd inhabit; nor with impure tread
Pollute these golden shrines: begone, and graze
Without a keeper; for of such an herd
Th' indignant Gods disdain to take the charge.

CHOR. Now, royal Phœbus, hear me speak: in this
Not an associate art thou, but alone
Thou didst this deed, and thine alone the blame.

APOL. Why this to me? Inform me; but be brief.

CHOR. Thy voice, pronounc'd from this oracular shrine,
Injoin'd this wretch to shed her mother's blood.

APOL. Injoin'd him to avenge his father's death.

CHOR. To this strange murder promis'd thy protection.

APOL. I charg'd him to seek refuge in this shrine.

CHOR. But these attendants thou with taunts insultest.

APOL. Unworthy they t' approach this sacred seat.

CHOR. Such was our charge: we come not uncommanded.

APOL. What is that honour? Make the glorious boast.

CHOR. To drive the murd'rers of their mothers hence.

APOL. What, fav'ring her, whose bold hand slew her husband?

CHOR. Nor shou'd his hands be stain'd with kindred blood.

APOL. The sacred pledges of connubial Juno *
And Jove hast thou diparag'd, set at nought;
And Venus is disparag'd by thy words,
From whom the dearest joys, that sweeten life,
Arise; for hallow'd is the nuptial bed,
Of deeper sanctity than oaths, and guarded
By justice. If to those, whose mutual rage
Bathes in each other's blood, thy chast'ning hand

* Apollo here speaks like the God of Wisdom: if Orestes was to be pursued with their vengeance, because he slew his mother, whilst they were favourable to that mother, though she had murdered her husband, they dishonoured Juno the goddess presiding over marriage, the nuptial treaties ratified by Jupiter, and the sweet endearments of Venus, more sacred than the oath with which the treaty was confirmed.

Is gentle; if thine eye looks milder on them,
Nor flames with wrath; unjustly does thy vengeance
Pursue Orestes; such I now behold
Thy threat'ning mein, to others more benign.
But Pallas, righteous queen, shall judge this cause.

CHOR. But never, never will I quit this man.

APOL. Pursue him then; to toil add fruitless toil.

CHOR. Think not thy words shall make my rage relent.

APOL. Shall thy rage touch him? No; I brook it not.

CHOR. At Jove's high throne thou art reputed great:
Yet, since a mother's blood calls loud for vengeance,
My keen pursuit shall trace him step by step.

APOL. To me his vows are paid; I will assist,
And set him free: for dreadful were the wrath
'Mongst Gods and men, shou'd I betray my suppliant.

CHOR. That moves not me.—These are his marks; observe them,
Unerring guides, tho' tongueless: follow, follow,
And, like the hound that by the drops of blood
Traces the wounded hind, let us pursue him.

The SCENE changes to the TEMPLE of MINERVA at ATHENS.

ORES. Hither, divine Minerva, by the mandate
Of Phœbus am I come. Propitious pow'r,
Receive me by the Furies' tort'ring rage
Pursued, no vile unhallow'd wretch, nor stain'd
With guilty blood, but worn with toil, and spent
With many a painful step to other shrines,
And in the paths of men. By land, by sea
Wearied alike, obedient to the voice,
Thy oracles of Phœbus, I approach
Thy shrine, thy statue, Goddess; here to fix
My stand, till judgment shall decide my cause.

[Here the Furies enter.]

CHOR. These toils oppress me, as with breathless haste

I urge the keen pursuit: o'er the long tract
Of continent, and o'er th' extended ocean,
Swift as the flying ship I hold my course,
Tho' on no pennons borne.—There, there he stands,
His speed outstripping mine. Have I then found thee?
With joy I snuff the scent of human blood.—
Take heed, take heed: keep careful watch; nor let
This murderer of his mother once more 'scape,
By secret flight, your vengeance: trembling, weak,
He hangs upon the image of the Goddess,
And wishes to be clear'd of his base deeds.
It may not be: no: when the fluent moisture
Is sunk into the ground, 'tis lost for ever:
Can then a mother's blood, spilt on the earth,
Be from the earth recover'd? No. Thy hour
Of suff'ring is arriv'd, the hour that gives
The purple stream, that warms thy heart, to quench
My thirst, which burns to quaff thy blood, and bend
To the dark realms below thy wasted limbs;
There, for thy mother's murder, shalt thou learn
To taste of pain; there see whatever mortal
Dar'd an injurious deed, profaned the Gods,
Attack'd with ruffian violence the stranger,
Or rais'd his impious hand against a parent,
Each with vindictive pains condemn'd to groan,
His crimes requiting; for beneath the earth,
The awful Judge of mortals, Pluto sits,
And with relentless Justice marks their deeds.

ORES. Train'd in affliction's rigid lore, I know
Many ablutions: when to speak I know,
When to be silent: inspiration now
With heav'nly wisdom prompts my tongue to plead.
The faded blood is vanish'd from my hands,
Nor from my mother's slaughter leaves a stain;

The recent crimson at Apollo's shrine
Wash'd off with lavers pure, with offer'd victims
Aton'd. This honest prelude might be graced
With many an argument: nor came I hither
Consorted with a vile and impious band.
All things with time grow old, and wear away.
And now from hallow'd lips my pious pray'r
Invokes the power presiding o'er this realm,
Royal Minerva, that she haste to aid
Her suppliant: so with voluntary zeal
Myself, my country, all the Argive people,
To her with justice I devote for ever.
If in the coasts of Libya, on the banks
Of Triton *, native stream, she sets her foot
Or bare, or buskin'd, prompt to aid her friends;

* What shall we say to the wonderful birth of this celebrated Goddess? Apollodorus gravely informs us, that Jupiter was enamoured of Thetis, and though the lady was coy, and changed herself into many forms to escape him, yet he obtained his desire. She told him, that if she now had a daughter, she would afterwards bring forth a son, who should enjoy the empire of the sky. Jupiter, finding her pregnant, and fearing her prediction, to avoid it, fairly swallowed her: this was a trick he learned of his father: the pregnancy however went on, though now it was transferred to the head of Jupiter, which in due time Prometheus, or as others say Vulcan, opened with an axe, and out leaped Minerva full-grown, and in complete armour. This was done on the banks of the Triton, a river of Libya, from whence Pallas is called Tritonia. Phurnutus tells us, that the lady's name was Metis, which signifies, Counsel: this helps him to a tolerable solution of the allegory, that Jupiter, only by following wise and prudent counsel, μητίστης καὶ συνετὸς ὤν, obtained the sovereignty of the skies: Prometheus therefore was the more proper to assist at the birth. It is only in continuation of the same allegory, that Minerva is said to have assisted Jupiter in the decisive battle against the giants in the plains of Phlegra, in which her service was so conspicuous, that she obtained the name of γιγαντοφόντις, the giant-killer. We are the better reconciled to this strange fiction, and to the explication of it, by the fine use to which Milton has applied it.

If o'er the plains of Phlegra, like a chief
That marshals his bold troops, she darts her eye,
Her presence I implore; tho' distant far,
The goddess hears; to free me from these ills.

CHOR. No: not Apollo, nor Minerva's pow'r
Shall set thee free, but that an abject outcast
Thou drag thy steps, seeking in vain to find
Rest to thy joyless soul, exhausted, worn,
A lifeless shadow. Yet thy pride replies not,
Me, and my threats despising tho' to me
Devoted, my rich victim, and alive
To feed my rage, not offer'd on the altar.
Hear now the potent strain, that charms thee mine.

PROS. Quickly, sisters, stand around,
Raise your choral warblings high;
Since, the guilty soul to wound,
Swells the horrid harmony.
Since to mortal man we show
How we give his fate to flow;
Since our will his doom ordains,
Show that justice 'mongst us reigns.
He, whose hands from guilt are pure,
Stands in innocence secure;
And from youth to honour'd age
Fears not our vindictive rage.
To the wretch, that strives to hide
Ruffian hands with murder died,
Cloth'd in terrors we appear,
Unrelentingly severe;
And, faithful to the injur'd dead,
Pour our vengeance on his head.

STRO. 1. Hear me, dread parent, sable-vested Night,
O hear th' avenger of each impious deed;

Whether we lie in shades conceal'd *,
Or to the eye of day reveal'd!
Seest thou how Phœbus robs me of my right
From my just rage the trembling victim freed,
Destin'd his mother's death t' atone,
And for her blood to shed his own!
O'er my victim raise the strain,
And let the dismal sound
His tortur'd bosom wound,
And to frenzy fire his brain.

* Ἀλαοῖσι καὶ διδορκόσι, Stanleius recte vertit cæcis et videntibus: Interpretis Græci ζῶσι καὶ θανοῦσιν ineptit: Pueri vident. Pauw.

Veram scripturam, ποινᾶν, proculdubio nobis suggerit scholiastes, hæc ita interpretatus ζῶσι καὶ θανοῦσιν ἔχδικον. Pauwius tamen miro stupore occæcatus lectionem hanc commentitiam esse, neque ex Scholiastæ verbis colligi posse pronunciare sustinuit. Scholiastæ autem assentior, appellatione cæcorum et videntium designari mortuos ac vivos, quanquam interpretationis hujus ineptiam vel pueros videre affirmat Pauwius. Sed talia quidem effutire longe est facillimum, probationibus vero idoneis astruere non cujusvis forsan hominis.—Heath.

As the translator, by adhering to the interpretation of Pauw, stands in the same predicament of a babbler blinded with wonderful stupidity, he must make his defence as well as he is able; whether he supports it with proper proofs, the candid reader will judge. The Furies in this very ode tell us, that it was a task assigned them by the Fates to pursue the murderer as long as he lived, ὅφρ' ἂν γᾶν ὑπέλθῃ: but at his death their commission ended: Æschylus in many places tells us, that in the regions below the guilty person came under the jurisdiction of the infernal Jupiter: We are also told, that the Furies, in the execution of their office, sometimes appeared to the guilty, as in the present case, armed with all their terrors; and that they sometimes pursue him ἀηλίῳ λάμπᾳ, with silent ruin, equally investigable.

Διερχομένοισι καὶ δυσομμάτοις ὁμῶς.

From these considerations the translator was induced to look on the Furies as the avengers of each impious deed, not to the living and the dead, but to those that saw them, or did not see them,

Whether they lie in shades conceal'd,
Or to the eye of day reveal'd.

Silent be the silver shell,
Whilst we chaunt the potent spell;
Then yelling bid th' infernal descant roll,
To harrow up my soul.

ANTIS. I. Avenging Fate, as bending o'er the loom
She wove the web, to us this part assign'd,
" Whoe'er the laws shall dare disdain,
" And his rude hand with murder stain,
" Pursue him Furies, urge his rigorous doom,
" Till refuge in the realms he find."
E'en there not free; my chast'ning pow'r
Pursues him to that dreary shore.
O'er my victim raise the strain,
And let the dismal sound
His tortur'd bosom wound,
And to frenzy fire his brain.
Silent be the silver shell,
Whilst we chaunt the potent spell;
Then yelling bid th' infernal descant roll,
To harrow up his soul.

STRO. 2. This task assign'd us at our natal hour,
Far from th' immortal Gods our steps we bend:
Nor welcome at the social feast,
Nor honour'd with a splendent vest;
For mine I proudly claim the dreadful pow'r
From its firm base the ruin'd house to rend,
When in calm peace its ruthless lord
Distains with a friend's blood his sword.
Him, tho' strong, we rush to seize;
And for the new-pour'd blood
Demand his purple flood,
Glorying in the sacrifice;
Duteous hast'ning to remove
Cares like these from angry Jove;

And spare, whilst fierce for blood my vengeance flies,
The terrors of the skies.

ANTIS. 2. His wrathful eye Heav'n's mighty monarch rolls,
Awfully silent, on this blood-stain'd race.
But all the gorgeous blaze of pow'r,
Which trembling mortals here adore,
When, mantled in these sable-shaded stoles,
With blood-besprinkled feet we urge the chase,
Sinks darkling to th' infernal shades,
And all its boasted glory fades.
Near him, as he flies, I bound *,
And when, with guilt opprest,
His weary steps wou'd rest,
Spurn him headlong to the ground.
Senseless he, perchance, and blind,
Such the frenzy of his mind,
Such the deep gloom guilt spreads around his walls,
He knows not that he falls.

EPOD. But shall shelt'ring wall or gloom
That from dark'ning guilt is spread,
Hide him from his rigorous doom,
Or protect his destin'd head?
Mine the vengeance to design,
And to stamp it deep is mine.
Sternly mindful of the crime,
Nor by man appeas'd, nor time,
When the wretch, whose deed unblest
Dares profane high Heav'n's behest,
Tho' conceal'd from mortal eyes
Thro' the sunless darkness flies,

* As the Chorus generally danced whilst they sung these odes, and the Athenians were excellent actors, we may be assured that the gestures, the boundings of the Furies at this part were violent, and really horrible.

We pursue the rugged chase,
And his dubious footsteps trace.
Hear then guilty mortals, hear,
And the righteous God revere;
Hear the task to me assign'd,
Fate the firm decree shall bind;
Mine the prize of old ordain'd,
Never with dishonour stain'd,
Tho' my drear abode profound
Night and darkness cover round.

MINERVA, ORESTES, CHORUS.

MIN. It was a voice that call'd; distant far
I heard it, where Scamander laves the fields
My ancient right: to me the Grecian chiefs
With voluntary zeal assign'd this portion
Of their rich conquest, ever to be mine,
Selected as a gift to the brave race *
Of Theseus. With a speed that equals wings
My vig'rous steeds thence whirl'd my car, the wind
Against my ægis rustling as I pass'd.
But who are these consorted here? Mine eye
Views them unterrified; but much I marvel.
What, and whence are you? To you all I speak,
To him, the stranger, seated at my image;
And you, whose hideous shape resembles nought
Of mortal race, nor Goddesses in Heav'n
Seen by the Gods, nor like the human form.
But the deform'd to taunt with obloquy

* After the destruction of Troy, Sigeum, in the division of its territory, was assigned to the Athenians, who built a temple on that promontory to their tutelary goddess, Minerva. This had lately fallen into the hands of the Mitylenians. The poet, who was of a most generous spirit, and in all his tragedies endeavoured to inspire his countrymen with a military ardour, takes this opportunity to encourage them to recover that tract.—STANLEY.

Is unbeseeming, justice starts at it.

CHOR. Daughter of Jove, take our report in brief.
We are the gloomy progeny of night,
Call'd Furies in the drear abodes below.

MIN. I know your race, and aptly added titles.

CHOR. Soon shalt thou learn my honours, and my office.

MIN. Speak clearly then, without perplexing preface.

CHOR. 'Tis ours to drive the murd'rers from the house.

MIN. This all the vengeance to their guilt assign'd?

CHOR. Where they shall never taste or peace or joy.

MIN. And does thy yelling voice thus drive HIM out?

CHOR. He dared to be the murd'rer of his mother.

MIN. Urg'd by the force of no necessity?

CHOR. What force cou'd urge the wretch to kill his mother?

MIN. He hears but half, that hears one party only.

CHOR. He wou'd refuse an oath, nor dares propose it *.

MIN. Thy aim seems rather to obtain the fame
Of justice, than to execute her laws.

CHOR. How so? Inform me; thou art rich in wisdom.

MIN. Deeds of injustice are not clear'd by oaths.

CHOR. Hear thou the cause, and judge with righteous justice.

MIN. Rests the decision of the cause on me?

CHOR. We reverence thee as worthiest 'midst the worthy.

MIN. Say, stranger, what can'st thou reply to this?
Speak first thy race, thy country, thy misfortunes;
Then urge thy plea against this accusation;
If trusting in the justice of thy cause,
Thus seated near my altar, thou embrace
With reverend hands, a suppliant as Ixion †,

* This is said in allusion to the practice of the court of Areopagus, where in charges of murder both the accuser and accused were obliged to plead on oath.—STANLEY from LYSIAS.

† The ancients took every method reason and religion could suggest to impress an horror of shedding human blood: Hector could not even make

My statue. Be thy answer short and clear.

ORES. Royal Minerva, let me first remove
What thy last words, with much concern, suggest.
I am not stain'd with blood, nor shall my hand
Pollute thy statue: what I urge in proof
Bears strong conviction. Him, whose hands are red
With blood, the laws forbid to plead his cause,
Till with its flowing gore the new-slain victim

a libation of wine, because his hands were defiled with blood, though it was the blood of enemies, whom he had slain in the noblest of all causes, the defence of his country,

By me that holy office were profan'd;
Ill fits it me, with human gore distain'd,
To the pure skies these horrid hands to raise,
Or offer heav'n's great sire polluted praise.

Il. vi. POPE.

For the same reason the pious Æneas could not touch his Penates, though to snatch them from the flames of burning Troy, but consigns them to his father,

Thou, thou, my sire, our gods and relics bear;
These hands, yet horrid with the stains of war,
Refrain their touch unhallow'd till the day,
When the pure stream shall wash these stains away.

Æneid. ii. PITT.

Hence their various rites of purifications, their oblations and sacrifices. Under this idea the priestess of Delphos is shocked at seeing in the temple a man abhorred by the Gods, because his hands are stained with blood; and the Furies thus insult Apollo:

See all defiled with gore thy throne;
There sate the murd'rer dropping blood.

Minerva is here apprehensive of this pollution to her temple; this indeed is but hinted, and that with much tenderness, by the bare mention of Ixion. The famous Alexander Ross tells us, that "Ixion was the son of Plegias, who "having murdered his father-in-law, went up and down the earth as a vaga-"bond, at last Jupiter did pity him, and expiating his crime, received him "into Heaven." The concern of Orestes to remove this suggestion shows, that he clearly understood the Goddess; and her answer expresses her satisfaction as to this point.

Has made atonement, and the cleansing wave
Restor'd his purity. In other shrines
Long since these hallow'd rites have been perform'd
With offer'd victims and the fluent stream.
Blameless of this offence, I next declare
My race: An Argive: nor to thee unknown
My sire, the leader of the naval hosts,
The royal Agamemnon; for with him
Thy conquering hand laid the proud walls of Troy
In dust: returning to his house he perish'd
By deeds of baseness; for my dark-soul'd mother
With various trains in private murder'd him;
Th' ensanguin'd bath attested the foul deed.
I, then an exile, bending back my steps,
Slew her that gave me birth; nor shall my tongue
Deny the deed; it was a vengeance due
To my lov'd father's shade: so Phœbus deem'd,
Who urg'd me, and denounc'd heart-rending woes,
Shou'd I shrink back refusing to avenge
The guilt: but if with justice, be thou judge.
To thy deciding voice my soul submits.

MIN. This is a cause of moment, and exceeds
The reach of mortal man: nor is it mine
To judge, when blood with eager rage excites
To vengeance. Thou with preparation meet
Hast to my shrine approach'd a suppliant pure,
Without offence; and to my favour'd city
Uncharg'd with blame I readily receive thee.
Let these, whose ruthless rage knows not the touch
Of pity, not succeeding in their plea,
Retire awhile, till judgment shall decide
The contest: from their breasts black poison flows,
And taints the sick'ning earth. Thus I pronounce

To each, unequal in this dubious strife
To give content to both. But since to me
Th' appeal is made, it shall be mine t' elect
Judges of blood, their faith confirm'd by oath,
And ratify the everlasting law.
Prepare you for the trial, call your proofs,
Arrange your evidence, bring all that tends
To aid your cause: I from the holiest men
That grace my city will select to judge
This cause with justice; men, whose sanctity
Abhors injustice, and reveres an oath.

CHORUS.

STRO. 1. Confusion on these upstart laws!
Havoc with haughty stride
Shall march, and wave her banner wide,
If venial be this bloody caitiff's cause.
Impunity shall mortals lead
To ev'ry savage deed,
And prompt the son with rage unblest
To plant the dagger in the parents' breast.
I smile at all this lawless force;
Nor shall our dreaded pow'r
In vengeance visit impious mortals more:
No: let destruction take her destin'd course.

ANTIS. 1. Whilst his own anguish one shall moan,
He hears his neighbour tell,
Appall'd, of deeds as fierce, as fell;
Tear falls to tear, and groan succeeds to groan.
Nor shall the rolling storm of woe
One gleam of comfort know.
When anguish rends the tortur'd breast,
Be not to us the mournful call addrest.

"Where is your throne, ye Furies, where
"Justice," the father cries,
Or the pale mother, as in blood she lies:
But justice from her throne is exil'd far.

STRO. 2. Yet are there hours, when conscious fear
And the stern eye, that darts
Severely thro' their secret hearts,
With sober counsels check their mad career.
For when no ray of heavenly light
Breaks thro' the sullen night,
Dark deeds ensue, and virtue's pow'r
By man, by state is reverenc'd no more.
Shall he, the wretch that scorns control,
And spurns each sacred law,
Or he that drags his chain with servile awe,
Feel the sweet peace that calms the virtuous soul?

ANTIS. 2. Placed in the midst does strength reside.
With an indignant frown
On each extreme the Gods look down;
Injustice is the child of impious pride.
But all the joys, that life can know,
From temper'd wisdom flow.
To justice chief thy soul incline,
And bow with reverence at her hallow'd shrine.
Nor dare, allur'd by cursed gold,
With foot profane and bold
To spurn her altars: vengeance waits the crime,
And arm'd with terrors knows her destin'd time.

EPOD. Let each with awe profound
A parent's honour'd name obey:
Each to thy milder voice, humanity,
Attentive homage pay,
When for the stranger thou art found
Pleading thy strains of pious potency.

He, that to virtue's heav'nly pow'r
Unforc'd his willing soul shall bow,
Nor ruin's tyrant rage shall know,
Nor keen affliction's tort'ring hour.
But he, that dares her sacred laws despise,
Trampling on justice to amass his prey,
Appall'd shall hear the rushing whirlwinds rise,
And tremble at the storms that swell the sea.
Wild with despair
He pours his pray'r,
Whirl'd in the giddy tempest round;
His blasted pride
The Gods deride,
And all his daring hopes confound;
Smile, as they view him rack'd with pain
Bound in misfortune's iron chain;
As on the pointed rock they see him thrown.
To perish there unpitied and alone.

MINERVA, APOLLO, ORESTES, CHORUS.
The JUDGES seated.

MIN. Now, herald, let thy voice to all my people
Proclaim attention: sound the Tuscan trumpet *,
That its ear-piercing notes may fill the city,
Commanding silence, and impressing awe
Due to this great assembly; that the state
May learn my everlasting laws, and hear
The righteous judgment that decides this cause.

CHOR. Royal Apollo, where thy rule extends,

* The Hetrurians were thought to have been the inventors of trumpets. In their towers upon the sea-coasts there were people appointed to be continually upon the watch both by day and night, and to give a proper signal if any thing happened extraordinary. This was done by a blast from a trumpet.—BRYANT'S ANALYSIS, vol. i. p. 405.

There lord it: but what right canst thou claim here?

APOL. To give my evidence I come. This man
Is at my shrine a suppliant, at my shrine
He sojourns; with ablutions * pure I cleans'd
His stains of blood; and now shall plead his cause,
Our common cause, since for his mother's death
Your accusations reach e'en me: but thou
Urge, as thou canst, thy plea: open the charge.

MIN. This is incumbent on you; open then
The charge: th' accuser's voice must first explain
Clearly thro' ev'ry circumstance the cause.

CHOR. Tho' we are many, brief shall be our words.
Now answer me in order, word for word.
My first demand is, Didst thou kill thy mother?

ORES. I did; and never shall deny the deed.

CHOR. First of the three this is one signal foil †.

ORES. Unmov'd I stand, and thy proud vaunts are vain.

CHOR. Declare it then at once, How didst thou kill her?

ORES. I drew my sword, and plung'd it in her breast.

CHOR. At whose persuasion? Or by whose advice?

* This is perfectly in conformity to the usage of antiquity. Whoever received into his house a person polluted with blood, expiated him with ablutions, sacrifices, and the other necessary rites; after which the stranger had a right to the most inviolable laws of hospitality. Thus Ixion, having been expiated by Jupiter, had a claim to his protection.

† In the Lucta, the victory was adjudged to him who gave his antagonist three falls: this is sufficiently attested by the epigram upon Milo, who, having challenged the whole assembly, and finding none that durst encounter him, claimed the crown; but, as he was going to receive it, unfortunately fell down; whereat the people cried out, that he had forfeited the prize; then Milo

Ἀνσὰς δ' ἐν μέσσοισιν ἀνέκραγεν· Οὐχὶ τρὶ' ἔσιν;
Ἕν κεῖμαι, λοιπὸν τ' ἄλλα με τὶς βαλέτω.

Arose, and standing in the midst thus cry'd,
One single fall cannot the prize decide,
And who is here can throw me th' other two?

Potter's Archæol. Græc.

ORES. By HIS oracular voice: he will attest it.
CHOR. The Prophet urge thee to this bloody deed!
ORES. Nor thus far have I to accuse my fate.
CHOR. Far other language the condemning vote
Will teach thy tongue.
ORES. My confidence is firm;
My father from the tomb will send me aid.
CHOR. Confiding in the dead, he slew his mother.
ORES. Her breast was spotted with a double stain.
CHOR. What may this mean? Speak, and inform thy Judges.
ORES. She slew my father when she slew her husband *.
CHOR. And yet thou livest: from that stain she's free.
ORES. Why, whilst she liv'd, didst thou not drive her out?
CHOR. She had no kindred blood with him she slew.
ORES. Is mine allied then to my mother's blood?
CHOR. How else, before thy birth, did she sustain,
How nourish thee? The murd'rous wretch disowns
That dearest of all ties, a mother's blood.
ORES. Now let me call thy testimony; now
Declare, Apollo, if I slew her justly:
For that I slew her, in such circumstance,
I not deny: if rightfully, or not,
Decide; that I to these may plead thy sanction.
APOL. To you, the great and reverend council here
Plac'd by Minerva, will I speak, and truly;
For never shall the God of Prophecy
Pronounce a falsehood; never have I utter'd
From my oracular seat to man, to woman,
Or state, save what the great Olympian Sire †

* When she slew her husband, she slew my father, and thus in one act was guilty of a double murder. By the law, which the Romans borrowed from Greece, the father and the son are esteemed as the same person, pater et filius habenter pro una persona. By this judicious observation of Pauw, we comprehend the meaning of the answer in the next line.

† The Priestess of the temple of Delphos had before informed us, that Ju-

Shall have commanded. Of his sovereign justice
Learn you the force, and bow to his high will;
Nor deem an oath of greater pow'r than Jove.

CHOR. This oracle, thou say'st, was dictated
By Jove, to charge Orestes, whilst his hand
Was arm'd with vengeance for his father's murder,
To pay no reverence to his mother's blood.

APOL. Of higher import is it, when a man
Illustrious for his virtues, by the Gods
Exalted to the regal throne, shall die,
Die by a woman's hand, by one that dares not
Bend, like an Amazon, the stubborn bow.
But hear me, Pallas, hear me, you that sit
In awful judgment to decide this cause.
Victorious from the war, with glory crown'd,
And graced with many' a trophy, at the bath
She smilingly receiv'd him; there refresh'd,
As o'er his head he threw the splendid robe
Prepar'd t' entangle him, she slew her husband.
So died the chief, the glorious, the renown'd,
The leader of the warlike troops of Greece:
And such I speak this woman, reverend Judges,
To strike your souls with horror at the deeds.

CHOR. So Jove, it seems, respects the father's fate;
Yet on his father he cou'd bind the chain,

piter himself had inspired Apollo with his prophetic skill; and this God afterwards demands reverence to his oracles as the voice of Jupiter. Virgil was too well versed in antiquity to omit such a circumstance; hence his ill-omened prophetess, to give the greater dread to her prediction, says,

Quæ Phœbo pater omnipotens, mihi Phœbus Apollo
Prædixit.

Virgil might possibly take this from Æschylus, as Macrobius affirms; or both might draw it from the everlasting fountain of Homer, who makes Apollo say at his birth,

Χρήσω τ' ἀνθρώποισι Διὸς νημερτέα βουλήν.—Hymn. v. 132.

The hoary Saturn: that his deed gainsays
Thy words: I pray you mark the poor evasion.

APOL. Detested hags, th' abhorrence of the Gods!
He cou'd unbind these chains, and the release
Has a medicinal pow'r. But when the blood,
That issues from the slain, sinks in the dust,
It never rises more. For this my sire
No remedy admits, in all besides
With sovereign pow'r or ruins or restores.

CHOR. See with what ill-judg'd zeal thy arguments
Labour t' absolve him! Shall the wretch, whose hand
Spilt on the earth the kindred blood that flow'd
Within his mother's veins, return to Argos
Lord of his father's house? Before what altar,
Sacred to public offrings, shall he bend?
What friendly laver shall admit his hands?

APOL. This too shall I explain; and mark me well,
If reason guides my words *. The mother's power
Produces not the offspring, ill call'd hers.
No: 'tis the father, that to her commits
The infant plant; she but the nutrient soil
That gives the stranger growth, if fav'ring Heav'n

* The righteous Pauw is highly offended at the impiety of this tragedy: one cannot but smile to see with what zeal he enters into the interests of these hideous sisters, as if he were enamoured of them. This passage gives him great offence: Ad hæc ego nauseo hic: Nexum considera: Sic ineptias ineptissimas tibi deprehendes statim: hæc tamen philosophica videbantur Stanleio. Stanley had too just a taste to judge of ancient sentiment by modern manners, or more enlightened knowledge. Wretched as this sophistry is, it certainly was at that time held as deep philosophy; otherwise the learned Euripides, who was not generous towards Æschylus, would not have put this sentiment into the mouth of Orestes in his plea to the father of Clytemnestra,

My father was the author of my being;
Thy daughter brought me forth: he gave me life,
Which she but foster'd: to the higher cause
An higher reverence then I deem'd was due.—ELECT.

Denies it not to flourish: this I urge
In proof, a father may assert that name
Without a mother's aid: an instance sits
Minerva, daughter of Olympian Jove;
Not the slow produce of nine darkling months,
But form'd at once in all her perfect bloom:
Such from no pregnant Goddess ever sprung.
Thy state, thy people, Pallas, be it mine
T' exalt to glory, and what else of greatness
I know to give. This suppliant to thy shrine
I sent, assuring his eternal faith;
Thy votary he, and his descendants thine,
From sire to son thro' all succeeding ages.

MIN. The pleas are urg'd: these now I charge to give
Sentence, with strict regard to truth and justice.

CHOR. We have discharg'd our shafts: and now I wait
To hear what sentence shall adjudge this cause.

MIN. What, am I never to escape your censure?

CHOR. Give what you've heard due weight; and with pure hearts
Pronouncing sentence reverence your high oath.

MIN. Ye citizens of Athens, now attend,
Whilst this great council in a cause of blood
First give their judgment. But thro' future ages
This awful court shall to the hosts of Ægeus
With uncorrupted sanctity remain.
Here on this Mount of Mars * the Amazons
Of old encamp'd, when their embattled troops
March'd against Theseus, and in glitt'ring arms

* Nothing in general is more uncertain than the origin of places, and the reason of their names: when this is lost in the obscurity of time, what remains to the antiquarian, but to analyse the word, and from thence deduce the cause? Our modern mythologists are supremely knowing in this process; remote ages were not unacquainted with it. Our poet however has the address even on this slight foundation to build up a pleasing compliment to his countrymen.

Breath'd vengeance; here their new-aspiring tow'rs
Rais'd high their rampir'd heads to storm his tow'rs;
And here their hallow'd altars rose to Mars:
Hence its illustrious name the cliff retains,
The Mount of Mars. In this the solemn state
Of this majestic city, and the awe *
That rises thence shall be an holy guard
Against injustice, shall protect the laws
Pure and unsullied from th' oppressive pow'r
Of innovation, and th' adulterate stain
Of foreign mixture: Shou'd thy hand pollute
The liquid fount with mud, where wilt thou find
The grateful draught? Let not my citizens
Riot in lawless anarchy, nor wear
The chain of tyrant pow'r, nor from their state
Loose all the curb of rigour: this remov'd,
What mortal man, uncheck'd with sense of fear,
Won'd reverence justice? Let the majesty,
That here resides, impress your souls with awe;
Your country has a fence, your town a guard,
Such as no nation knows; not those that dwell
In Scythia †, or the cultur'd realms of Pelops:
This court, superior to th' alluring glare
Of pestilent gold, this court, that claims your awe
Severely just, I constitute your guard,
Watchful to shield your country and its peace:
These my commands to ev'ry future age

* This whole charge of Minerva is worthy of the Goddess of Wisdom. By celebrating the high antiquity of the temple, its honourable foundation, the dignity of the court, the authority and impartiality of its sentence, the purity and superior excellence of the laws, she inspires that reverence to the laws, and the administration of them, which constitutes the firmest security of obedience and good manners.

† By this mention of Scythia the poet alludes to Anacharsis, the celebrated lawgiver of that country, cotemporary with Solon.

Have I extended. Now behoves you, judges,
Give test of your integrity; bring forth
The shells; with strictest justice give your suffrage,
And reverence your high oath. This is my charge.

CHOR. Nor of their honours rob this train, whose pow'r
Is dreadful in the drear abodes below.

APOL. And be my oracles, the voice of Jove,
Rever'd, nor seek to move their firm decree.

CHOR. Beyond thy charge protecting deeds of blood,
Nor reverend are thy oracles, nor pure.

APOL. Think of the expiation, which of old
Ixion made for blood: wilt thou arraign
My father's councils there? Or slept his wisdom?

CHOR. Thou say'st it: but if justice fails me here,
This land shall feel the terrors of my vengeance.

APOL. Unhonour'd thou by ev'ry pow'r of Heav'n,
Or young, or old, to triumph here is mine.

CHOR. Such in the house of Pheres* were thy deeds,
When, won by thy alluring voice, the Fates
On mortal man conferr'd immortal honours.

APOL. To aid, to grace the pious, when their pray'rs
Rightly invoke our influence, is just.

CHOR. What, hast thou crush'd the pow'r of ancient Fate,
And wou'dst thou now delude our honour'd age?

APOL. Soon shall thy malice, baffled in this cause,
Shed its black venom harmless to thy foes.

* Admetus, the son of Pheres, asked Alcestis in marriage; her father consented on this hard condition, that he should yoke a lion and a boar to his chariot: he addressed his vows to Apollo and Hercules, and by their aid rendered the savages gentle. Some time after, Admetus, being dangerously ill, again addressed his vows to Apollo; the God refused his salutary aid, but upon condition, that one of his near relations would devote himself to a voluntary death for him: this Alcestis did: Hercules, being then on his expedition to bring Cerberus from hell, brought back Alcestis to her husband.—FULGENTIUS.—Whether the poet alludes to this story, or to some other with which we are not acquainted, the learned reader will judge.

CHOR. Since thy proud youth insults my hoary years,
I wait th' event in silence, and suspend
The fury of my vengeance on this city.
MIN. Last to give suffrage in this cause is mine:
In favour of Orestes shall I add
My vote; for as no mother gave me birth,
My grace in all things, save the nuptial rites,
Attends the male, as from my sire I drew
The vigour of my soul. No woman's fate,
Stain'd with her husband's blood, whom nature form'd
Lord of his house, finds partial preference here.
Orestes, if the number of the votes
Be equal, is absolv'd. Now from the urn
Let those among the Judges, to whose honour
This office is assign'd, draw forth the lots.
ORES. O Phœbus, what th' event that waits this cause!
CHOR. O Night, dark mother, thro' thy sable gloom
Seest thou these things? Now on the doubtful edge
Of black despair I stand, or joyful light,
Driv'n out with infamy, or grac'd with honours.
APOL. Now, strangers, count the lots with righteous heed,
And with impartial justice sever them.
One shell misplac'd haply brings ruin, one
May raise again a desolated house.
MIN. He is absolv'd, free from the doom of blood,
For equal are the numbers of the shells.
ORES. O thou, whose tutelary pow'r preserv'd
The honours of my house, thou, Goddess, thou
Hast to his country and his native rites
Restor'd this exile; and each Greek shall say,
This Argive to his father's throne returns;
So Pallas wills, and Phœbus, and the God
All-pow'rful to protect: my father's death
He mark'd severe, and looks indignant down

On those that patronise my mother's cause.
First to this country, and to this thy people
Thro' time's eternal course I pledge my faith,
And bind it with an oath: now to my house
I bend my steps: never may chieftain thence
Advance against this land with ported spear.
If any shall hereafter violate
My oath now made, tho' then these mould'ring bones
Rest in the silent tomb, my shade shall raise
Invincible distress, disasters, toils,
To thwart them, and obstruct their lawless march,
Till in dismay repentant they abhor
Their enterprise. But to the social pow'rs
That reverence this thy state, and lift the lance
In its defence, benevolent shall be
My gentler influence. Hail, Goddess; hail,
Ye guardians of the city; be your walls
Impregnable, and in the shock of war
May conquest grace the spear that aids your cause!

CHOR. I burst with rage. With cruel pride
These youthful Gods my slighted age deride;
And, the old laws disdaining to obey,
Rend from my hands my prey.
Tortur'd with grief's corroding smart,
And taught disgrace and scorn to know,
Distilling from my anguish'd heart
The pestilential drop shall flow:
Where'er it falls, nor fruit around,
Nor leaf shall grace the blasted ground;
Thro' the sick air its baleful dews
A caustic venom shall diffuse;
And breathing on this hated race
With deep rough scars the beauteous form deface.

Vainly shall I heave my sighs,
Or bid my angry vengeance rise?
To insults, which my bosom rend,
Vulgar spirits scorn to bend;
And shall thy daughters, awful Night, in vain
Of their disgrace complain?

MIN. Let my entreaties move you; bear not this
With such deep anger; for no conquest here
Wounds your insulted honour: from the urn
The lots came equal, so dispos'd by truth,
To thee no insult off'ring; and from Jove
Flow'd splendid signs: he gave the oracle,
He added his high test, that for the deed
Orestes shou'd not suffer. Breathe not then
Yourr heavy vengeance on this land; restrain
Your indignation; o'er these sick'ning fields
Drop not your pestilential dews, nor blast
Their glitt'ring verdure, and their springing seeds.
And here I pledge my faith, this grateful land
Shall willingly receive you, raise your seats
High at their blazing hearths, and, with deep awe
Imprest, pay reverend honours to your pow'r.

CHOR. I burst with rage. With cruel pride
These youthful Gods my slighted age deride;
And, the old laws disdaining to obey,
Rend from my hands my prey.
Tortur'd with grief's corroding smart,
And taught disgrace and scorn to know,
Distilling from my anguish'd heart
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And breathing on this hated race
With deep rough scars the beauteous form deface.
Vainly shall I heave my sighs,
Or bid my angry vengeance rise?
To insults, which my bosom rend,
Vulgar spirits scorn to bend:
And shall thy daughters, awful Night, in vain
Of their disgrace complain?

MIN. No, you are not disgrac'd; nor let your wrath,
Immortal as you are, to mortal man
Spread desolation o'er the earth. I too
Prevail with Jove. And wherefore shou'd I say
Of all the Gods I only know the keys *
That ope those solid doors, within whose vaults
His thunders sleep? Of these there is no need.
By me persuaded, let thy hasty tongue
Forbear those threats, from which no fruit can flow,
But ruin to the earth: compose that rage,

* This is a very curious passage, as it informs us that Minerva alone, of all the Gods, had the command of the thunder of Jupiter; hence the learned Virgil,

Ipsa Jovis rapidum jaculata e nubibus ignem.

Æn. i. v. 46.

She, for the crime of Ajax, from above
Launch'd thro' the clouds the fiery bolts of Jove.—PITT.

At the same time it contains an oblique threat of the severest nature, but conveyed in the gentlest manner; shewing, that she waved her power to force their compliance, and condescended to entreat, and giving an example of that placability to which she endeavoured to persuade these angry powers.

As this foul sisterhood was driven from the society of the Gods, admitted to no feast, nor suffered to abide in any temple, this offer of Minerva was very advantageous to them, and did them the greatest honour; and, as it was urged with the gentlest and most insinuating courtesy, it is no wonder that they suffered themselves to be prevailed upon to accept it. From their consent to abide here as friends, their harsh name of Erinnyes was changed to Eumenides.

Whose swelling tide o'erflows all bounds, with me
In the same mansion, and with equal honours
Rever'd, enjoying thro' these ample realms
The prime oblations, victims doom'd to bleed
For blessings on the birth, or nuptial hour,
That thou shalt thank me for this friendly counsel.

CHOR. Shall I brook this? Shall I then deign
In this curs'd land to spend my slighted age.
And my lost honours mourn in vain?
No: be each vengeful thought inflam'd with rage.
Ah me, the keen, the madd'ning smart!
Deep, deep it cuts, it rends my heart.
Hear, awful Night, my raving passion hear!
These Gods, with a malignant smile,
Ah me! my baffled pow'r beguile,
And from my brows the public honours tear.

MIN. Thine anger will I bear with, for thy years
Are more than mine, thy wisdom more; tho' Jove
Hath with no niggard grace on me bestow'd
A prudent sense. You yet are strangers here;
But I foresee, when once your seats are fix'd,
These scenes will be delightful, and the flow
Of future years to the inhabitants
Roll more abundant honours. Where Erectheus
Rais'd high his regal structures, thou shalt hold
Thy residence, receiving from the men,
And from the train of females, such high honours
As mortals never paid thee. Cast not then
On these my realms the pestilent bane, that fires
Beyond the rage of wine the frantic youth
To wild ensanguin'd slaughter: in their hearts
Pour not the fury of the crested cock,
Exciting discord, broils, and civil war.
To foreign wars, when dangers threaten nigh,

Let glory lead their arms: domestic strife
Is hateful to my soul: bethink thee well,
Thou hast thy choice, by courtesy to win
Returns of courtesy, and reverenc'd high
To share this country grateful to the Gods.

CHOR. Shall I brook this? Shall I then deign
In this curs'd land to spend my slighted age,
And my lost honours mourn in vain?
No: be each vengeful thought inflam'd with rage.
Ah me, the keen, the madd'ning smart!
Deep, deep it cuts, it rends my heart.
Hear, awful Night, my raving passion hear!
These Gods, with a malignant smile,
Ah me! my baffled pow'r beguile,
And from my brows the public honours tear.

MIN. I will not yet surcease to speak thee fair;
And never with just cause shalt thou complain
That with inhospitable pride my youth,
And the rude race of mortals dwelling here,
Drove thee, an ancient Goddess, with disgrace
An outcast from this land. If yet the pow'r
Of mild persuasion, dropping from my lips
In words of sweet and soothing courtesy,
Hath not lost all its virtue, thou wilt stay:
If thou disdain to stay, yet not with justice
Canst thou with wrath or vengeance load this town,
Nor on its people shed thy baneful dews.
'Tis in thy choice to bless this land, and fix
With everlasting honours here thy seat.

CHOR. What seat, say, royal virgin, shall be mine?

MIN. Where misery never comes. Assent, accept it.

CHOR. I do assent. What honour now awaits me?

MIN. That, without thee, no house shall rise to glory.

CHOR. Wilt thou do this, advance my honour thus?

MIN. Him, that reveres thee, shall my pow'r protect.
CHOR. And shall thy word stand unimpair'd by time?
MIN. It is not mine to violate my faith.
CHOR. Thy words have almost sooth'd me to a calm,
And the high storm of anger dies away.
MIN. The charms of friendship here shalt thou enjoy.
CHOR. Say, with what strains shall I salute this land?
MIN. Such as, allied to conquest, from the earth,
From the rich dews of ocean, from the sky
Soft-temper'd with the genial sun, may wake
Ambrosial gales diffusing o'er this earth
Luxuriance to its fruits, and to its flocks
Prolific vigour, to its peopled towns
Th' unfading glow of health. Be this thy charge;
Mine, in the glorious toils of war to grace
Their fame-ennobled arms with victory.

CHOR. Goddess, here thy seat I share,
Hostile to this town no more;
Which the dreadful God of War,
And the Thund'rer's sovereign pow'r,

Give the pride of Greece to rise
Guardian of the rites divine,
Glory of the fav'ring skies,
Give to watch o'er freedom's shrine.

I too breathe the potent pray'r:
May the sun's ambrosial ray,
Rolling o'er the fruitful year,
All its richest charms display!

MIN. For my lov'd city with a willing mind
This do I, seating here these awful pow'rs
That yield with much reluctance; for o'er man

The Fates assign them a despotic sway.
And he, that feels their terrors, often knows not
Whence springs the vengeful wrath, whose iron scourge
Embitters life: for the sire's long-pass'd crimes
Draw to their chast'ning hand the suff'ring son;
And, 'midst his thoughts of greatness, silent ruin
With ruthless hate pursues, and crushes him.

CHOR. O'er their saplings spreading fair
May no chill wind noxious blow;
Nor the dry and scorching air
Singe their fresh buds' opening glow.

For my sake may no disease
Sicken o'er the blasted year:
May their teeming flocks increase,
And a double offspring bear.

'Gainst the solemn festal day
Numerous may their herds arise;
Sportive o'er the rich fields play,
Gift of the propitious skies.

MIN. Hear this, ye guardians of the state, and know
Her word shall be accomplish'd; for the Gods
That tread the spangled skies, and those that hold
In the dark realms beneath their solemn thrones,
Revere her awful pow'r; and her high strains
To mortal man in accents dread pronounce
Blessings to some, to some a life of woes.

CHOR. May no harsh untimely doom
Sweep the manly youth away;
May the virgins' ripening bloom
Crown with love the bridal day.

You, that to the Fates allied *
Claim this just and ample pow'r ;
You, that o'er each house preside,
Sovereign rulers of each hour;

Goddesses, with holy dread
Whose high state mankind revere,
Here your softest influence shed,
Here extend your guardian care.

MIN. This ready zeal accorded to my country
Delights me ; and with ardour must I love
Gentle persuasion, that hath tuned my voice
To move them from their stern and fierce resolves.
The pleading voice of Jove hath here prevail'd ;
And my warm efforts in the cause of mercy
Extend their triumph thro' all future time.

CHOR. Ne'er may discord's hideous pow'r
Here unsated stalk its round :
Slaughter ne'er with kindred gore
Madly drench the thirsty ground;

* Hesiod, recounting the progeny of Night, says,

Καὶ μοίρας καὶ κῆρας ἐγείνατο νηλεοποίνους,
Κλώθώ τε, Λάχεσίν τε, καὶ Ἄτροπον αἵτε βροτοῖσι
Γεινομένοισι δίδωσιν ἔχειν ἀγαθόν τε κακόν τε.—Theog. v. 217.

She gave birth to the Fates and the merciless Destinies, Clotho, Lachesis, and Atropos, who assign to mortals at their birth good and evil —It may not perhaps be easy to distinguish precisely the different offices of these kindred powers : by the Fates was designed a secret and immutable series of events necessarily flowing from their causes ; and their firm decrees extended over Gods and men, as we learn from Phurnutus and Sallust the philosopher. The Destinies had their direction over human life, influencing the birth, the present, and the future fortune of mortals. So that the Fates seem more peculiarly to have presided over nations and cities, the Destinies over individuals.

Whilst revenge in barb'rous pride
Shakes the streets with thund'ring tread,
Blood for blood demands, and wide
Joys the mutual rage to spread.

But to union's soft command
May their minds harmonious move;
Leagu'd in war, a friendly band;
Tun'd in peace to social love.

MIN. So the mild accents of the soothing tongue,
Attun'd by wisdom, win their easy way:
And to this people from these horrid forms
I see much good. With gentle courtesy
Their courtesy requiting, always own'd
By acts of highest reverence; you, whose care
Is watchful o'er this country and this seat
Of justice, all shall reap the meed of glory.

CHOR. Hail, with wealth, with glory grac'd,
Citizens of Athens, hail!
Next to Jove in glory plac'd,
Never may your honours fail!

Train'd to wisdom's sober lore,
Favour'd with Minerva's love,
Guarded by her virgin pow'r,
Dear thro' her to sov'reign Jove.

MIN. And you all hail! But be it mine to show
The place assign'd you for your residence.
Go to those sacred flames, they will conduct you,
And from these hallow'd victims sink with speed
To the dark shades below; imprison there

Whate'er is noxious to these realms; whate'er
Has influence to bless them, send in triumph.
And you, high-lineag'd guardians of the state,
Attend these stranger-guests to their new seats,
And be each gentle thought attun'd to good.

CHOR. Once more hail, and hail again,
All that here have fix'd your seat;
Mortal and immortal train,
Guardians of Minerva's state!

Here your residence I share.
To my pow'r due homage pay,
Ne'er shall woe or sullen care
Cloud with grief life's golden day.

MIN. I like these votive measures; and will send
The bright flames of these splendor-shedding torches,
With those that guard my hallow'd image here,
Attendant on you to the dark abodes
Beneath the earth. And let th' Athenian train,
The grace, the glory of the wide-stretch'd world,
Their manly youth, their virgins' roseate bloom,
And their age-honour'd matrons, now advance,
Array'd in richest vesture darting round
Its vermeil-tinctur'd radiance; let the torches
Blaze, that this sable troop thro' future times
May shine conspicuous for their friendly aid.

THE ATTENDANT TRAIN.

Remove then from this hallow'd fane,
Daughter of Night, remove your virgin train:
With festal pomp, and solemn tread,
Reverend your awe-commanding state we lead.

Breathing blessings o'er this land,
Seek your ancient caves below,
Leading Fortune in your hand,
Breathing blessings as you go.

For you the altars rise, the victims bleed,
And sacred honours are decreed;
For you the rich libations dew the ground,
Whilst torches spread their blaze around.
Go, in your glory then rejoicing go;
Go, and lead the Fates along,
Joining in this votive song;
Whilst on this city from his throne on high
Jove propitious bends his eye.
Go then; and as you move your friendly train,
Responsive to this warbled strain
Harmonious bid your swelling voices flow.

THE

PERSIANS.

THE

PERSIANS.

NO representation can be conceived more agreeable to a brave and free people, than that which sets before their eyes the ruin of an invading tyrant defeated by their own valour; and no poet could ever claim the right of making such representation with so good a grace as Æschylus, who had borne a distinguished part in the real scene. Animated by his noble subject, and the enthusiasm with which he loved his country, he has here displayed all the warmth and dignity of his genius, but tempered at the same time with so chastised a judgment, that we are surprised to see the infant drama come forth at once with all those graces which constitute its perfection; it is like his own Minerva, that sprung from the head of Jupiter,

Then shining heav'nly fair, a Goddess arm'd.

Besides this wonderful management of the parts, the poet has the delicacy to set the glory of his

countrymen in the brightest view, by putting their praises into the mouths of their enemies. Not satisfied with a spirited narration of their defeat, and a recital of the many royal chiefs that perished in that battle; not satisfied with spreading the terror through all the realms of Persia, and placing them in a manner before our eyes in all the distress of desolation and despair; he hath interested even the dead, and, with the awful solemnity of a religious incantation, evoked the ghost of Darius to testify to his Persians, that no safety, no hope remained to them, if they continued their hostile attempts against Greece; so that his sublime conception hath engaged Earth and Sea, Heaven and Hell, to bear honourable testimony to the glory of his countrymen, and the superiority of their arms.

This tragedy was exhibited eight years after the defeat at Salamis, whilst the memory of each circumstance was yet recent; so that we may consider the narration as a faithful history of this great event. The war was not yet ended, though the Persian monarch had offered to make the most humiliating concessions, and the Athenians were inclined to accept them; but Themistocles opposed the peace. So that we are further to consider this play in a political light; the poet, by so animated a description of the pernicious effects of an obstinate pride, and by filling the spectators with a malignant compassion for the vanquished Xerxes, in-

directly undisposing his countrymen to a continuation of the war. Thus every thing at Athens, even their shows, had a respect to the public good. This is a fine remark of P. Brumoy.

The scene of this tragedy is at Susa, before the ancient structure appropriated to the great council of state, and near the tomb of Darius.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

ATOSSA

MESSENGER

GHOST OF DARIUS

XERXES

CHORUS, THE COUNCIL OF STATE.

THE

PERSIANS*.

CHORUS.

WHILST o'er the fields of Greece th' embattled troops
Of Persia march, with delegated sway
We o'er their rich and gold-abounding seats
Hold faithful our firm guard; to this high charge
Xerxes, our royal lord, th' imperial son

* Darius, king of Persia, having demanded the daughter of Jancyrus, king of the European Scythians, in marriage, and not obtaining the lady, was so highly offended, that he marched with a great army to revenge the affront; but succeeding ill against the Scythians, on his return he sent Datis and Artaphernes with an army of two hundred thousand foot, and ten thousand horse, to subdue Greece; they had advanced within ten miles of Athens, which had particularly displeased the Great King, when Miltiades, at the head of nine thousand Athenians, and one thousand Plataeans, met them in the plains of Marathon, and gave them battle. Datis drew one hundred thousand foot and all his horse into the field; but the Persians were totally defeated, and fled to their ships with great precipitation. To revenge this disgrace, Xerxes, the son of Darius, invaded Greece in person, with one thousand two hundred ships of war, and two thousand transports; his land forces consisting of seven hundred thousand foot, and four hundred thousand horse: these, with the retinue of women and servants that attended the Asiatic princes in their military expeditions, amounted to more than five millions.

Of great Darius, chose our honour'd age.
But for the king's return, and his arm'd host
Blazing with gold, my soul presaging ill
Swells in my tortur'd breast: for all her force
Hath Asia sent, and for her youth I sigh.
Nor messenger arrives, nor horseman spurs
With tidings to this seat of Persia's kings.

Xerxes, having forced the pass of Thermopylæ, marched into Attica, which he wasted, and finding Athens deserted, set it on fire. The Grecians had retired with all their effects to Trœzene and Salamis; here Themistocles with three hundred ships destroyed the Persian fleet; their supplies of provision being hereby cut off, the land forces attempted to make their retreat through Bœotia and Thessaly to Thrace, but most of them perished by the sword, famine, and pestilence. The battle of Platæa cut off the remains of this formidable armament, and secured the liberty of Greece. Such is the noble subject of this tragedy. For this account we have the testimonies of Herodotus, Isocrates, Diodorus the Sicilian, Plutarch, Cicero, Justin, Nepos, and others: yet a late ingenious writer has undertaken, from the silence of the Persian history, to disprove them all: "can any man, who has made the "least observation on history, he asks, suppose for a moment that such myriads could by any means have been maintained in one collected body?"—History tells us, that they perished chiefly through famine, and its attendant the pestilence. He says, "the destruction of such a number would have convulsed the whole of Asia, had it been united under one empire: could it "possibly have been unfelt in Persia?"—Was it not severely felt? He thinks, that "the States of Greece appear in reality, with regard to the Persians, to "have been too far removed from that degree of importance, which could "hold them up as objects of such high ambition, or of such mighty resentment. These famous invasions have, therefore, an appearance of being "simply the movements of the governors of Asia Minor, to regulate or enforce "a tribute which the Greeks might frequently be willing to neglect. Ma"rathon, Salamis, and other celebrated battles, *may* indeed have been real "events; and the Grecian writers, to dignify their country, *may* have turned "hyperbole into historic fact, and swelled the thousands of the Persian Satrap "into the millions of the Persian king."—Richardson's Dissertation.—But this disregard to the evidence of Grecian antiquity is only to prepare us for the reception of his Persian antiquity: yet could this very sensible writer see and lament in other cases, that "attachment to system has heaped "error upon error, and raised splendid fabrics upon pillars of ice."

The gates of Susa and Ecbatana
Pour'd fourth their martial trains; and Cissia sees
Her ancient tow'rs forsaken, whilst her youth,
Some on the bounding steed, the tall bark some
Ascending, some with painful march on foot
Haste on, t' arrange the deep'ning files of war.
Amistres, Artaphrenes, and the might
Of great Astaspes, Megabazes bold,
Chieftains of Persia, kings, that to the pow'r
Of the great king obedient, march with these
Leading their martial thousands; their proud steeds
Prance under them; steel bows and shafts their arms,
Dreadful to see, and terrible in fight,
Deliberate valour breathing in their souls.
Artembares, that in his fiery horse
Delights; Masistres; and Imæus bold,
Bending with manly strength his stubborn bow;
Pharandaces, and Sosthanes, that drives
With military pomp his rapid steeds.
Others the vast prolific Nile hath sent;
Pegastagon, that from Ægyptus draws
His high birth; Susiscanes; and the chief
That reigns o'er sacred Memphis, great Arsames;
And Ariomardus, that o'er ancient Thebes
Bears the supreme dominion; and with these
Drawn from their wat'ry marshes numbers train'd
To the stout oar. Next these the Lycian troops,
Soft sons of luxury; and those that dwell
Amidst the inland forest, from the sea
Far distant; these Metragathes commands,
And virtuous Arceus, royal chiefs, that shine
In burnish'd gold, and many a whirling car
Drawn by six generous steeds from Sardis lead
A glorious and a dreadful spectacle.

And from the foot of Tmolus, sacred mound,
Eager to bind on Greece the servile yoke,
Mardon and Tharybis the massy spear
Grasp with unwearied vigour; the light lance
The Mysians shake. A mingled multitude
Swept from her wide dominions skill'd to draw
Th' unerring bow, in ships Euphrates sends
From golden Babylon. With falchions arm'd
From all th' extent of Asia move the hosts
Obedient to their monarch's stern command.
Thus march'd the flow'r of Persia, whose lov'd youth
The world of Asia nourish'd, and with sighs
Laments their absence; many an anxious look
Their wives, their parents send, count the slow days,
And tremble at the long-protracted time.

STRO. 1. Already o'er the adverse strand
In arms the monarch's martial squadrons spread;
The threat'ning ruin shakes the land,
And each tall city bows its tow'red head.
Bark bound to bark, their wond'rous way
They bridge across th' indignant sea;
The narrow Hellespont's vex'd waves disdain,
His proud neck taught to wear the chain.
Now has the peopled Asia's warlike lord,
By land, by sea, with foot, with horse,
Resistless in his rapid course,
O'er all their realms his warring thousands pour'd;
Now his intrepid chiefs surveys,
And glitt'ring like a God his radiant state displays.

ANTIS. 1. Fierce as the dragon scal'd in gold
Thro' the deep files he darts his glowing eye;
And pleas'd their order to behold,
His gorgeous standard blazing to the sky,
Rolls onward his Assyrian car,
Directs the thunder of the war,

Bids the wing'd arrows' iron storm advance,
Against the slow and cumbrous lance.
What shall withstand the torrent of his sway,
When dreadful o'er the yielding shores
Th' impetuous tide of battle roars,
And sweeps the weak-opposing mounds away?
So Persia with resistless might
Rolls her unnumber'd hosts of heroes to the fight.

TRO. 2. For when misfortune's fraudful hand
Prepares to pour the vengeance of the sky,
What mortal shall her force withstand,
What rapid speed th' impending fury fly?
Gentle at first with flatt'ring smiles
She spreads her soft enchanting wiles,
So to her toils allures her destin'd prey,
Whence man ne'er breaks unhurt away.
For thus from ancient times the Fates ordain,
That Persia's sons shou'd greatly dare,
Unequall'd in the works of war;
Shake with their thund'ring steeds th' ensanguin'd plain,
Dreadful the hostile walls surround,
And lay their rampir'd tow'rs in ruins on the ground.

NTIS. 2. Taught to behold with fearless eyes
The whitening billows foam beneath the gale,
They bid the naval forests rise,
Mount the slight bark, unfurl the flying sail,
And o'er the angry ocean bear
To distant realms the storm of war.
For this with many a sad and gloomy thought
My tortur'd breast is fraught:
Ah me! for Persia's absent sons I sigh;
For whilst in foreign fields they fight,
Our towns expos'd to wild affright
An easy prey to the invader lie:

Where, mighty Susa, where thy pow'rs,
To wield the warrior's arms, and guard thy regal tow'rs?
EPOD. Crush'd beneath th' assailing foe,
Her golden head must Cissia bend;
Whilst her pale virgins, frantic with despair,
Thro' all her streets awake the voice of woe;
And, flying with their bosoms bare,
Their purfled stoles in anguish rend:
For all her youth in martial pride,
Like bees that, clust'ring round their king,
Their dark-embodied squadrons bring,
Attend their scepter'd monarch's side,
And stretch across the wat'ry way
From shore to shore their long array.
The Persian dames with many a tender fear
In grief's sad vigils keep the midnight hour;
Shed on the widow'd couch the streaming tear,
And the long absence of their loves deplore.
Each lonely matron feels her pensive breast
Throb with desire, with aching fondness glow,
Since in bright arms her daring warrior drest
Left her to languish in her love-lorn woe.
CHOR. Now ye grave Persians, that your honour'd seats
Hold in this ancient house, with prudent care
And deep deliberation, so the state
Requires, consult we, pond'ring the event
Of this great war, which our imperial lord,
The mighty Xerxes, from Darius sprung,
The stream of whose rich blood flows in our veins,
Leads against Greece; whether his arrowy show'r
Shot from the strong-brac'd bow, or the huge spear
High brandish'd, in the deathful field prevails.
But see, the monarch's mother: like the Gods
Her lustre blazes on our eyes: My queen,

Prostrate I fall before her*: All advance
With reverence, and in duteous phrase address her.

Whole CHORUS.

Hail, queen, of Persia's high-zon'd dames supreme,
Age-honour'd mother of the potent Xerxes,
Imperial consort of Darius, hail!
The wife, the mother of the Persians' God,
If yet our former glories fade not from us.

ATOS. And therefore am I come, leaving my house,
That shines with gorgeous ornaments and gold,
Where in past days Darius held with me
His royal residence. With anxious care
My heart is tortur'd: I will tell you, friends,
My thoughts, not otherwise devoid of fear,
Lest mighty wealth with haughty foot o'erturn
And trample in the dust that happiness,
Which, not unbless'd by Heav'n, Darius rais'd.
For this with double force unquiet thoughts
Past utterance fill my soul; that neither wealth
With all its golden stores, where men are wanting,
Claims reverence; nor the light, that beams from pow'r,
Shines on the man, whom wealth disdains to grace.
The golden stores of wealth indeed are ours;
But for the light, such in the house I deem
The presence of its lord, there I have fears.
Advise me then, you whose experienc'd age
Supports the state of Persia: prudence guides
Your counsels, always kind and faithful to me.

CHOR. Speak, royal lady, what thy will, assur'd
We want no second bidding, where our pow'r

* The Persians worshipped the Sun as the symbol of the Divine power: with the same prostrations they worshipped their kings, and even gave them the title of Gods, as their majesty was the tutelary power of the empire.—Hyde, de Rel. Vet. Pers.

In word or deed waits on our zeal: our hearts
In this with honest duty shall obey thee.

ATOS. Oft, since my son hath march'd his mighty host
Against th' Ionians, warring to subdue
Their country, have my slumbers been disturb'd
With dreams of dread portent; but most last night,
With marks of plainest proof. I'll tell thee then;
Methought two women stood before my eyes
Gorgeously vested, one in Persian robes
Adorn'd, the other in the Doric garb.
With more than mortal majesty they mov'd,
Of peerless beauty; sisters too they seem'd,
Tho' distant each from each they chanc'd to dwell,
In Greece the one, on the barbaric coast
The other. 'Twixt them soon dissention rose:
My son then hasted to compose their strife,
Sooth'd them to fair accord, beneath his car
Yokes them, and reins their harness'd necks. The one,
Exulting in her rich array, with pride
Arching her stately neck, obey'd the reins;
The other with indignant fury spurn'd
The car, and dash'd it piecemeal, rent the reins,
And tore the yoke asunder: down my son
Fell from the seat, and instant at his side
His father stands, Darius, at his fall
Impress'd with pity: him when Xerxes saw,
Glowing with grief and shame, he rends his robes.
This was the dreadful vision of the night.
When I arose *, in the sweet-flowing stream
I bath'd my hands, and on the incens'd altars
Presenting my oblations to the Gods

* To expiate the ill-omened vision of the night: hence Persius,

Noctem flumine purgas.——STANLEY.

T' avert these ills, an eagle* I behold
Fly to the Altar of the Sun: aghast
I stood, my friends, and speechless; when an hawk
With eager speed runs thither, furious cuffs
The eagle with his wings, and with his talons
Unplumes his head; mean time th' imperial bird
Cow'rs to the blows defenceless. Dreadful this
To me that saw it, and to you that hear.
My son, let conquest crown his arms, wou'd shine
With dazzling glory; but shou'd fortune frown,
The state indeed presumes not to arraign
His sovereignty, yet how, his honour lost,
How shall he sway the sceptre of this land †?

CHOR. We wou'd not, royal lady, sink thy soul
With fear in the excess, nor raise it high
With confidence. Go then, address the Gods;
If thou hast seen ought ill, entreat their pow'r
T' avert that ill, and perfect ev'ry good
To thee, thy sons, the state, and all thy friends.
Then to the earth, and to the mighty dead,
Behoves thee pour libations; gently call
Him that was once thy husband, whom thou saw'st

* As the Sun was peculiarly the deity of the Persians, and the Eagle the emblem of royalty, this omen evidently points at Xerxes.

† The translation follows the correction of Pauw: Mr. Heath retains the common reading, and renders the passage thus, "If my son conquers, he will "be glorious; but if he be conquered, he is not accountable to the state, but "will rule the kingdom as usual." The spirit of Æschylus is not thus tame. That Atossa feared a revolt in the state, appears by her entreating the Chorus, the great council of Persia, to comfort her son at his return, and attend him to his house, Μὴ καί τι πρὸς κακοῖσι πρόσθηται κακὸν; and by declaring, that she will not forsake in their afflictions those whom she holds most dear,

Οὐ γὰρ τὰ φίλτατ' ἐν κακοῖς προδώσομεν.—V. 853.

And that the Chorus had the same apprehensions is evident from the latter part of the next ode.

In visions of the night; entreat his shade
From the deep realms beneath to send to light
Triumph to thee, and to thy son; whate'er
Bears other import, to enwrap, to hide it
Close in the covering earth's profoundest gloom.
This, in the presage of my thoughts that flow
Benevolent to thee, have I propos'd;
And all, we trust, shall be successful to thee.

ATOS. Thy friendly judgment first hath plac'd these dreams
In a fair light, confirming the event
Benevolent to my son, and to my house.
May all the good be ratified! These rites
Shall, at thy bidding, to the Pow'rs of Heav'n,
And to the manes of our friends, be paid
In order meet, when I return: mean while
Indulge me, friends, who wish to be inform'd
Where, in what clime, the tow'rs of Athens rise.

CHOR. Far in the west, where sets th' imperial sun.

ATOS. Yet my son will'd the conquest of this town.

CHOR. May Greece thro' all her states bend to his pow'r.

ATOS. Send they embattled numbers to the field?

CHOR. A force, that to the Medes hath wrought much woe.

ATOS. Have they sufficient treasures in their houses?

CHOR. Their rich earth yields a copious fount of silver *.

ATOS. From the strong bow wing they the barbed shaft?

CHOR. They grasp the stout spear, and the massy shield.

ATOS. What monarch reigns, whose power commands their ranks?

CHOR. Slaves to no lord, they own no kingly pow'r †.

* This alludes to their rich silver mines.

† This was the glory of the free states of Greece. The Persian monarch held all the subjects of his empire, of whatever rank or condition, as his slaves; he had indeed the gallantry to except his wife. Δίδωμι σοὶ ἐμαυτὸν δοῦλον καὶ σύμμαχον, I yield myself to thee as thy slave and assistant in the war, was the language of Gobryas when he surrendered to Cyrus. This was the

ATOS. How can they then resist th' invading foe?
CHOR. As to spread havoc thro' the numerous host,
That round Darius form'd their glitt'ring files.
ATOS. Thy words strike deep, and wound the parent's breast,
Whose sons are march'd to such a dangerous field.
CHOR. But, if I judge aright, thou soon shalt hear
Each circumstance; for this way, mark him, speeds
A Persian messenger: he bears, be sure,
Tidings of high import, or good or ill.

ATOSSA, CHORUS, MESSENGER.

MESS. Woe to the towns thro' Asia's peopled realms!
Woe to the land of Persia, once the port
Of boundless wealth, how is thy glorious state
Vanish'd at once, and all thy spreading honours
Fall'n, lost! Ah me! unhappy is his task
That bears unhappy tidings: but constraint
Compels me to relate this tale of woe.
Persians, the whole barbaric host is fall'n.
CHOR. O horror, horror! What a baleful train
Of recent ills! Ah Persians, as he speaks
Of ruin, let your tears stream to the earth.
MESS. It is e'en so, all ruin; and myself,
Beyond all hope returning, view this light.
CHOR. How tedious and oppressive is the weight
Of age, reserv'd to hear these hopeless ills?
MESS. I speak not from report; but these mine eyes
Beheld the ruin which my tongue wou'd utter.
CHOR. Woe, woe is me! Then has the iron storm,
That darken'd from the realms of Asia, pour'd
In vain its arrowy show'r on sacred Greece.
MESS. In heaps th' unhappy dead lie on the strand

servile yoke which Xerxes wished to bind on Greece; to repel which they exerted themselves thus gloriously.—STANLEY.

Of Salamis, and all the neighbouring shores.

CHOR. Unhappy friends, sunk, perish'd in the sea;
Their bodies, 'midst the wreck of shatter'd ships,
Mangled, and rolling on th' encumber'd waves!

MESS. Nought did their bows avail, but all the troops
In the first conflict of the ships were lost.

CHOR. Raise the funereal cry, with dismal notes
Wailing the wretched Persians. Oh, how ill
They plann'd their measures, all their army perish'd!

MESS. O Salamis, how hateful is thy name!
And groans burst from me when I think of Athens.

CHOR. How dreadful to her foes! Call to remembrance
How many Persian dames, wedded in vain,
Hath Athens of their noble husbands widow'd!

ATOS. Astonied with these ills, my voice thus long
Hath wanted utterance: Griefs like these exceed
The pow'r of speech, or question: yet e'en such,
Inflicted by the Gods, must mortal man
Constrain'd by hard necessity endure.
But tell me all, without distraction tell me,
All this calamity, tho' many a groan
Burst from thy labouring heart. Who is not fallen?
What leader must we wail? What scepter'd chief
Dying hath left his troops without a lord *?

MESS. Xerxes himself lives, and beholds the light.

* Atossa with great delicacy inquires in general,

What scepter'd chief
Dying hath left his troops without a lord?

though her particular anxiety was for her son: thus the messenger understands her; and, having assured her of the safety of Xerxes, proceeds without further question to inform her what sceptred chiefs had perished. Mr. Heath destroys this propriety, and the whole sense of the context by the idea which he has affixed to the words ἄνανδρον τάξιν, and for which he has no warrant from Æschylus: would he carry the same idea to the νῆνιδας ἀνάνδρους of v. 289?

ATOS. That word beams comfort on my house, a ray
That brightens thro' the melancholy gloom.
MESS. Artembares, the potent chief that led
Ten thousand horse, lies slaughter'd on the rocks
Of rough Sileniæ. The great Dadaces,
Beneath whose standard march'd a thousand horse,
Pierc'd by a spear, fell headlong from the ship.
Tenagon, bravest of the Bactrians, lies
Roll'd on the wave-worn beach of Ajax' isle *.
Lilæus, Arsames, Argestes, dash
With violence in death against the rocks
Where nest the silver Doves †. Arcteus, that dwelt
Near to the fountains of the Ægyptian Nile,
Adeues, and Pheresba, and Pharnuchus,
Fell from one ship. Matallus, Chrysa's chief,
That led his dark'ning squadrons, thrice ten thousand,
On jet-black steeds ‡, with purple gore distain'd
The yellow of his thick and shaggy beard.
The Magian Arabus, and Artames
From Bactra, mould'ring on the dreary shore
Lie low. Amistris, and Amphistreus there
Grasps his war-wearied spear; there prostrate lies
Th' illustrious Ariomardus; long his loss
Shall Sardis weep: the Mysian Sisames,
And Tharybis, that o'er the burden'd deep
Led five times fifty vessels; Lerna gave

* Salamis was the birth-place of Ajax; so that hero boasts in the 7th Iliad,

From warlike Salamis I drew my birth.

So Horace of his brother,

Teucer Salamina, patremque,
Cum fugeret.

† Salamis was sacred to Venus; hence it abounded with doves.

‡ Æschylus never loads his verse with unmeaning epithets; the colour of these horses is particularly marked; it is not easy to assign the reason.

The hero birth, and manly grace adorn'd
His pleasing form, but low in death he lies
Unhappy in his fate. Syennesis,
Cilicia's warlike chief, who dared to front
The foremost dangers, singly to the foes
A terror, there too found a glorious death.
These chieftains to my sad remembrance rise,
Relating but a few of many ills.

ATOS. This is the height of ill, ah me! and shame
To Persia, grief, and lamentation loud.
But tell me this, afresh renew thy tale,
What was the number of the Grecian fleet,
That in fierce conflict their bold barks shou'd dare
Rush to encounter with the Persian hosts.

MESS. Know then, in numbers the barbaric fleet
Was far superior: in ten squadrons, each
Of thirty ships, Greece plough'd the deep; of these
One held a distant station. Xerxes led
A thousand ships; their number well I know;
Two hundred more, and seven, that swept the seas
With speediest sail: this was their full amount.
And in th' engagement seem'd we not secure
Of victory? But unequal fortune sunk
Our scale in fight, discomfiting our host.

ATOS. The Gods preserve the city of Minerva.

MESS. The walls of Athens are impregnable,
Their firmest bulwarks her heroic sons.

ATOS. Which navy first advanc'd to the attack?
Who led to th' onset, tell me; the bold Greeks,
Or, glorying in his numerous fleet, my son?

MESS. Our evil Genius, lady, or some God
Hostile to Persia, led to ev'ry ill.
Forth from the troops of Athens came a Greek,
And thus address'd thy son, th' imperial Xerxes;

" Soon as the shades of night descend *, the Grecians
" Shall quit their station; rushing to their oars
" They mean to separate, and in secret flight
" Seek safety." At these words the royal chief,
Little conceiving of the wiles of Greece
And Gods averse, to all the naval leaders
Gave his high charge; " Soon as yon sun shall cease
" To dart his radiant beams, and dark'ning night
" Ascends the temple of the sky †, arrange
" In three divisions your well-order'd ships,
" And guard each pass, each out-let of the seas:
" Others enring around this rocky isle
" Of Salamis: Shou'd Greece escape her fate,
" And work her way by secret flight, your heads
" Shall answer the neglect." This harsh command
He gave, exulting in his mind, nor knew
What Fate design'd. With martial discipline
And prompt obedience, snatching a repast,
Each mariner fix'd well his ready oar.
Soon as the golden sun was set, and night
Advanc'd, each train'd to ply the dashing oar
Assum'd his seat; in arms each warrior stood,
Troop cheering troop thro' all the ships of war.

* C. Nepos tells us from Herodotus, that the commanders of the Grecian fleet, terrified with the destruction of Athens, agreed to return home to defend their own states: this must have been a ruinous measure, as, had they separated, they would have been easily crushed. Themistocles alone opposed it; but his remonstrance had little weight with Eurybiades, the king of Sparta, who then commanded in chief: he therefore formed this plan, that they might all be obliged to fight, however contrary to their judgment it succeeded. Thus Xerxes, says the historian, was conquered by the measures of Themistocles, rather than by the arms of Greece.

† As the Sun was peculiarly worshipped by the Persians, Xerxes with great propriety and beauty calls his place in the Heavens, " The Temple of the " Sky."

Each to th' appointed station steers his course ;
And thro' the night his naval force each chief
Fix'd to secure the passes. Night advanc'd,
But not by secret flight did Greece attempt
T' escape. The morn, all beauteous to behold,
Drawn by white steeds bounds o'er th' enlighten'd earth ;
At once from ev'ry Greek with glad acclaim
Burst forth the song of war, whose lofty notes
The echo of the island rocks return'd,
Spreading dismay thro' Persia's hosts thus fallen
From their high hopes ; no flight this solemn strain
Portended, but deliberate valour bent
On daring battle ; whilst the trumpet's sound
Kindled the flames of war. But when their oars,
The Pæan ended, with impetuous force
Dash'd the resounding surges, instant all
Rush'd on in view ; in orderly array
The squadron on the right first led, behind
Rode their whole fleet ; and now distinct we heard
From ev'ry part this voice of exhortation,
" Advance, ye sons of Greece, from thraldom save
" Your country, save your wives, your children save,
" The temples of your Gods, the sacred tomb
" Where rest your honour'd ancestors ; this day
" The common cause of all demands your valour."
Meantime from Persia's hosts the deep'ning shout
Answer'd their shout ; no time for cold delay ;
But ship 'gainst ship its brazen beak impell'd.
First to the charge a Grecian galley rush'd ;
Ill the Phœnician bore the rough attack,
Its sculptur'd prow all shatter'd. Each advanc'd
Daring an opposite. The deep array
Of Persia at the first sustain'd th' encounter ;
But their throng'd numbers, in the narrow seas

Confin'd, want room for action; and depriv'd
Of mutual aid beaks clash with beaks, and each
Breaks all the other's oars: with skill dispos'd
The Grecian navy circled them around
With fierce assault; and rushing from its height
Th' inverted vessel sinks; the sea no more
Wears its accustom'd aspect, with foul wrecks
And blood disfigur'd; floating carcasses
Roll on the rocky shores: the poor remains
Of the barbaric armament to flight
Ply ev'ry oar inglorious: onward rush
The Greeks amidst the ruins of the fleet,
As thro' a shoal of fish caught in the net,
Spreading destruction: the wide ocean o'er
Wailings are heard, and loud laments, till night
With darkness on her brow brought grateful truce.
Shou'd I recount each circumstance of woe,
Ten times on my unfinish'd tale the sun
Wou'd set; for be assur'd that not one day
Cou'd close the ruin of so vast an host.

ATOS. Ah, what a boundless sea of woe hath burst
On Persia, and the whole barbaric race!

MESS. These are not half, not half our ills; on these
Came an assemblage of calamities,
That sunk us with a double weight of woe.

ATOS. What fortune can be more unfriendly to us
Than this? Say on, what dread calamity
Sunk Persia's host with greater weight of woe.

MESS. Whoe'er of Persia's warriors glow'd in prime
Of vig'rous youth, or felt their generous souls
Expand with courage, or for noble birth
Shone with distinguish'd lustre, or excell'd
In firm and duteous loyalty, all these
Are fall'n, ignobly, miserably fall'n.

ATOS. Alas their ruthless fate, unhappy friends!
But in what manner, tell me, did they perish?

MESS. Full against Salamis an isle arises *,
Of small circumference, to th' anchor'd bark
Unfaithful; on the promontory's brow,
That overlooks the sea, Pan loves to lead
The dance: to this the monarch sends these chiefs,
That when the Grecians from their shatter'd ships
Shou'd here seek shelter, these might hew them down
An easy conquest, and secure the strand
To their sea-wearied friends; ill judging what
Th' event: but when the fav'ring God to Greece
Gave the proud glory of this naval fight,
Instant in all their glitt'ring arms they leap'd
From their light ships, and all the island round
Encompass'd, that our bravest stood dismay'd;
Whilst broken rocks whirl'd with tempestuous force,
And storms of arrows crush'd them; then the Greeks
Rush to th' attack at once, and furious spread
The carnage, till each mangled Persian fell.
Deep were the groans of Xerxes, when he saw
This havoc *; for his seat, a lofty mound
Commanding the wide sea, o'erlook'd his hosts.
With rueful cries he rent his royal robes,
And thro' his troops embattled on the shore
Gave signal of retreat; then started wild,
And fled disorder'd. To the former ills

* Psyttaleia, a rough uncultivated rock between Salamis and the continent. Pan is always represented as delighting in such places,

Καὶ κορυφὰς ὀρέων, καὶ πετρήεντα κάρηνα.—STANLEY.

† Xerxes viewed this fight from Ægialus, a mountain on the opposite shore: the silver chair, on which he sate, was afterwards placed in the temple of Minerva in Athens, and dedicated to that Goddess, as was the golden-hilted scymetar of Mardonius.

These are fresh miseries to awake thy sighs.

ATOS. Invidious Fortune, how thy baleful pow'r
Hath sunk the hopes of Persia! Bitter fruit
My son hath tasted from his purpos'd vengeance
On Athens fam'd for arms; the fatal field
Of Marathon, red with barbaric blood,
Suffic'd not; that defeat he thought t' avenge,
And pull'd this hideous ruin on his head.
But tell me, if thou can'st, where didst thou leave
The ships, that happily escap'd the wreck?

MESS. The poor remains of Persia's scatter'd fleet
Spread ev'ry sail for flight, as the wind drives,
In wild disorder. And on land no less
The ruin'd army, in Bœotia some,
With thirst oppress'd at Crene's cheerful rills
Were lost; forespent with breathless speed some pass
The fields of Phocis, some the Doric plain,
And near the gulf of Melia, the rich vale
Thro' which Sperchius rolls his friendly stream.
Achaia thence and the Thessalian state
Receiv'd our famish'd train; the greater part
Thro' thirst and hunger perish'd there, oppress'd
At once by both: but we our painful steps
Held onwards to Magnesia, and the land
Of Macedonia, o'er the ford of Axius,
And Bolbe's sedgy marches, and the heights
Of steep Pangæos, to the realms of Thrace.
That night, e'er yet the season, breathing frore*

* The battle of Salamis was fought on the 20th of the month Bœdromion, which answers to September; no wonder then that this early frost appeared miraculous to the Persians. Æschylus observes propriety of manners in representing them as adoring the Earth and Sky; the Greek writers are unanimous in their relation, that the ancient Persians worshipped the elements, as the prima omnium rerum semina; Fire, as derived from the Sun; the Air, or the wide circumference of the sky, which they esteemed to be Jupiter;

Rush'd winter, and with ice encrusted o'er
The flood of sacred Strymon: such as own'd
No God till now, awe-struck, with many' a pray'r
Ador'd the earth and sky. When now the troops
Had ceas'd their invocations to the Gods,
O'er the stream's solid crystal they began
Their march; and we, who took our early way,
E'er the sun darted his warm beams, pass'd safe:
But when his burning orb with fiery rays
Unbound the middle current, down they sunk
Each over other; happiest he who found
The speediest death: the poor remains, that 'scap'd,
With pain thro' Thrace dragg'd on their toilsome march,
A feeble few, and reach'd their native soil;
That Persia sighs thro' all her states, and mourns
Her dearest youth. This is no feigned tale;
But many of the ills, that burst upon us
In dreadful vengeance, I refrain to utter.

CHOR. O Fortune, heavy with affliction's load,
How hath thy foot crush'd all the Persian race!

ATOS. Ah me, what sorrows for our ruin'd host
Oppress my soul! Ye visions of the night
Haunting my dreams, how plainly did you show
These ills?—You set them in too fair a light.
Yet, since your bidding hath in this prevail'd,
First to the Gods wish I to pour my pray'rs,
Then to the mighty dead present my off'rings,
Bringing libations from my house: too late,
I know, to change the past; yet for the future,

the Earth; and Water. Hyde, a zealous advocate for the orthodoxy of Magism, cries out, Bone deus, quanta sunt hæc mendacia! The fact, however, is incontestable; and whether the adoration was religious or civil, real or emblematical, was of no concern to the Athenian poet, though of much to the Christian divine. Ipse viderit.

If haply better fortune may await it.
Behoves you, on this sad event, to guide
Your friends with faithful councils. Shou'd my son
Return e'er I have finish'd, let your voice
Speak comfort to him; friendly to his house
Attend him, nor let sorrow rise on sorrows.

STRO. Awful sovereign of the skies,
When now o'er Persia's numerous host
Thou bad'st the storm with ruin rise,
All her proud vaunts of glory lost,
Ecbatana's imperial head
By thee was wrapt in sorrow's dark'ning shade;
Thro' Susa's palaces with loud lament,
By their soft hands their veils all rent,
The copious tear the virgins pour,
That trickles their bare bosoms o'er.
From her sweet couch up starts the widow'd bride,
Her lord's lov'd image rushing on her soul,
Throws the rich ornaments of youth aside,
And gives her griefs to flow without control:
Her griefs not causeless; for the mighty slain
Our melting tears demand, and sorrow-soften'd strain.

ANTIS. Now her wailings wide despair
Pours these exhausted regions o'er;
Xerxes, ill-fated, led the war;
Xerxes, ill-fated, leads no more;
Xerxes sent forth th' unwise command,
The crouded ships unpeopled all the land;
That land, o'er which Darius held his reign,
Courting the arts of peace, in vain,
O'er all his grateful realms ador'd,
The stately Susa's gentle lord.
Black o'er the waves his burden'd vessels sweep,
For Greece elate the warlike squadrons fly;

Now crush'd, and whelm'd beneath th' indignant deep
The shatter'd wrecks and lifeless heroes lie:
Whilst, from the arms of Greece escap'd, with toil
Th' unsheltered monarch roams o'er Thracia's dreary soil.

EPOD. The first in battle slain
By Cychrea's craggy shore
Thro' sad constraint, ah me! forsaken lie,
All pale and smear'd with gore;—
Raise high the mournful strain,
And let the voice of anguish pierce the sky:—
Or roll beneath the roaring tide,
By monsters rent of touch abhorr'd;
Whilst thro' the widow'd mansion echoing wide
Sounds the deep groan, and wails its slaughter'd lord:
Pale with his fears the helpless orphan there
Gives the full stream of plaintive grief to flow;
Whilst age its hoary head in deep despair
Bends, list'ning to the shrieks of woe.
With sacred awe
The Persian law
No more shall Asia's realms revere;
To their lord's hand,
At his command,
No more th' exacted tribute bear.
Who now falls prostrate at the monarch's throne?
His regal greatness is no more.
Now no restraint the wanton tongue shall own,
Free from the golden curb of pow'r;
For on the rocks, wash'd by the beating flood,
His awe-commanding nobles lie in blood.

ATOSSA, CHORUS.

ATOS. Whoe'er, my friends, in the rough stream of life
Hath struggled with affliction, thence is taught

That, when the flood begins to swell, the heart
Fondly fears all things: when the fav'ring gale
Of fortune smooths the current, it expands
With unsuspecting confidence, and deems
That gale shall always breathe. So to my eyes
All things now wear a formidable shape,
And threaten from the Gods: my ears are pierc'd
With sounds far other than of song. Such ills
Dismay my sick'ning soul: hence from my house
Nor glitt'ring car attends me, nor the train
Of wonted state, whilst I return, and bear
Libations soothing to the father's shade
In the son's cause; delicious milk, that foams
White from the sacred heifer: liquid honey,
Extracts of flow'rs; and from its virgin fount*
The running chrystal; this pure draught, that flow'd
From th' ancient vine, of pow'r to bathe the spirits
In joy; the yellow olive's fragrant fruit,
That glories in its leaves' unfading verdure;
With flow'rs of various hues, earth's fairest offspring,
Enwreath'd. But you, my friends, amidst these rites
Raise high your solemn warblings †, and invoke

* The Persians endeavoured to preserve the virgin purity of water with the most religious attention, esteeming *that* and fire, in this pure state, to be the only images of the Divine nature in this world: with this view guards were assigned to the fountains and rivers; and it was the highest crime to defile water, insomuch that Tiridates, when he was going to Nero, refused to sail, because he held it unlawful to pollute the sea: navigare noluit, quia expuere in maria, aliisque mortalium necessitatibus violare naturam eam fas non putavit. Pliny.—Hyde, p. 138.

† After these libations it was usual to address the dead with a solemn hymn: thus Electra in the Choephoræ, having poured the oblations at the tomb of her father, bids the Chorus

Attune the Pæan,
And soothe his shade with solemn harmony.

Your lord, divine Darius: I meanwhile
Will pour these off'rings to th' infernal Gods.

CHOR. Yes, royal lady, Persia's honour'd grace,
To earth's dark chambers pour thy off'rings: We
With choral hymns will supplicate the pow'rs
That guide the dead to be propitious to us.
And you, that o'er the realms of night extend
Your sacred sway, thee mighty earth, and thee
Hermes; thee chief, tremendous king, whose throne
Awes with supreme dominion, I adjure:
Send, from your gloomy regions, send his shade
Once more to visit this ethereal light;
That he alone, if ought of dread event
He sees yet threat'ning Persia, may disclose
To us poor mortals Fate's extreme decree.

Hears the honour'd, godlike king?
These barbaric notes of woe,
Taught in descant sad to ring,
Hears he in the shades below?
Thou, O Earth, and you, that lead
Thro' your sable realms the dead,
Guide him as he takes his way,
And give him to th' ethereal light of day!

Let th' illustrious shade arise
Glorious in his radiant state,
More than blaz'd before our eyes,
E'er sad Susa mourn'd his fate.

But here it was of absolute necessity, as a *charm* to evoke the dead, ὕμνος ψυχαγωγός. The Persians were greatly addicted to (what we call) magical incantations, which probably they learned from the conquered Chaldæans; so that nothing, as Stanley well observes, could be more in character than these rites, this νεκυομαντία.

Dear he liv'd, his tomb is dear,
Shining virtues we revere:
Send them, monarch of the dead,
Such as Darius was, Darius' shade.

He in realm-unpeopling war
Wasted not his subjects' blood,
Godlike in his will to spare,
In his councils wise and good.
Rise then, sovereign lord, to light;
On this mound's sepulchral height
Lift thy sock in saffron died,
And rear thy rich Tiara's regal pride!

Great and good, Darius, rise:
Lord of Persia's lord, appear:
Thus invok'd with thrilling cries
Come, our tale of sorrow hear!
Woe her Stygian pennons spreads,
Brooding darkness o'er our heads;
For stretch'd along the dreary shore
The flow'r of Asia lies distain'd with gore.

Rise, Darius, awful pow'r,
Long for thee our tears shall flow;
Why thy ruin'd empire o'er
Swells this double flood of woe?
Sweeping o'er the azure tide
Rode thy navy's gallant pride;
Navy now no more, for all
Beneath the whelming wave——

GHOST of DARIUS, ATOSSA, CHORUS.

DAR. Ye faithful Persians *, honour'd now in age,

* The Ghost of Darius here rises suddenly, and interrupts the unfinished

Once the companions of my youth, what ills
Afflict the state? The firm earth groans, it opes,
Disclosing its vast deeps; and near my tomb
I see my wife: this shakes my troubled soul
With fearful apprehensions; yet her off'rings
Pleas'd I receiv'd. And you around my tomb
Chanting the lofty strain, whose solemn air
Draws forth the dead, with grief-attemper'd notes
Mournfully call me: not with ease the way
Leads to this upper air; and the stern Gods,
Prompt to admit, yield not a passage back
But with reluctance: much with them my pow'r
Availing, with no tardy step I come.
Say then, with what new ill doth Persia groan?

CHOR. My wonted awe * o'ercomes me; in thy presence
I dare not raise my eyes, I dare not speak.

hymn. The appearance of this royal shade, the servile prostration of the affrighted satraps, the grief and the tears of Atossa, presents us with one of the finest subjects for picture that ever employed the pencil of a painter; indeed Æschylus abounds with pittoresque images, arising from the most vivid imagination, marked with the most precise expression. The excellent Mr. Romney gave a strong instance of his good sense and fine taste, when he called Æschylus "the painter's poet:" the public may expect to see this scene, and some others, designed by him in the genuine spirit of Æschylus; so that the translator will have this merit, if he has no other, to have given rise to some paintings that will do honour to our country.

* Nothing could be more agreeable to the free republican spirit of the Athenians, than to see their proud invaders represented under this servile awe. The Persians, when they approached the royal presence, fell with their faces on the ground, and esteemed this one of their most honourable institutions, as in this adoration of their king, they adored the image of God the preserver of all things.—Plutarch in Themistocle.—But the Grecians had so great an abhorrence of this custom, that Conon, though sent to the Persian court by his friend Pharnabazus, and charged with a commission of the greatest consequence to the welfare of Greece, refused to be introduced to Artaxerxes, that he might not disgrace his country by complying with this barbaric mode.—Nepos.

DAR. Since from the realms below, by thy sad strains
Adjur'd, I come, speak, let thy words be brief,
Say whence thy grief, tell me unaw'd by fear.
CHOR. I dread to forge a flatt'ring tale, I dread
To grieve thee with an harsh offensive truth.
DAR. Since fear hath chain'd his tongue, high-honour'd dame,
Once my imperial consort, check thy tears,
Thy griefs; and speak distinctly. Mortal man
Must bear his lot of woe; afflictions rise
Many from sea, many from land, if life,
Be haply measur'd thro' a length'ned course.
ATOS. O thou, that grac'd with fortune's choicest gifts
Surpassing mortals, whilst thine eye beheld
Yon sun's ethereal rays, liv'dst like a God
Blest 'midst thy Persians; blest I deem thee now
In death, e'er sunk in this abyss of ills;
Darius, hear at once our sum of woe,
Ruin thro' all her states hath crush'd thy Persia.
DAR. By pestilence, or faction's furious storms?
ATOS. Not so: near Athens perish'd all our troops.
DAR. Say, of my sons which led the forces thither?
ATOS. Th' impetuous Xerxes, thinning all the land.
DAR. By sea or land dar'd he this rash attempt?
ATOS. By both: a double front the war presented.
DAR. An host so vast what march conducted o'er?
ATOS. From shore to shore he bridg'd the Hellespont.
DAR. What, cou'd he chain the mighty Bosphorus?
ATOS. E'en so, some God assisting his design.
DAR. Some God of pow'r to cloud his better sense.
ATOS. Th' event now shows what mischiefs he achiev'd.
DAR. What suffer'd they, for whom your sorrows flow?
ATOS. His navy sunk spreads ruin thro' the camp.
DAR. Fell all his host beneath the slaught'ring spear?
ATOS. Susa, thro' all her streets, mourns her lost sons.

DAR. How vain the succour, the defence of arms?
ATOS. In Bactra age and grief are only left.
DAR. Ah, what a train of warlike youth is lost!
ATOS. Xerxes, astonish'd, desolate, alone——
DAR. How will this end? Nay, pause not. Is he safe?
ATOS. Fled o'er the bridge, that join'd the adverse strands.
DAR. And reach'd this shore in safety? Is this true?
ATOS. True are thy words, and not to be gainsaid.
DAR. With what a winged course the oracles
Haste their completion? With the light'ning's speed
Jove on my son hath hurl'd his threaten'd vengeance:
Yet I implor'd the Gods that it might fall
In time's late process: but when rashness drives
Impetuous on, the scourge of Heav'n uprais'd
Lashes the Fury forward; hence these ills
Pour headlong on my friends. Not weighing this,
My son, with all the fiery pride of youth,
Hath quicken'd their arrival, whilst he hop'd
To bind the sacred Hellespont, to hold
The raging Bosphorus, like a slave, in chains*,
And dar'd th' advent'rous passage, bridging firm
With links of solid iron his wond'rous way,
To lead his numerous host; and, swell'd with thoughts
Presumptuous, deem'd, vain mortal, that his pow'r
Shou'd rise above the Gods, and Neptune's might.
And was not this the frenzy of the soul?
But much I fear lest all my treasur'd wealth

* Authors have been careful enough to transmit to us an account of the intemperate pride of Xerxes. When the first bridge, which he formed over the Hellespont, was broken by the waves, he ordered the sea to be scourged for having dared to disobey his will, and threw chains into it, thereby signifying that he would bind it as his slave in fetters: but it has not been observed, that the peculiar aggravation of this arose from the impiety of it; for, as the Persians revered water as particularly sacred, Xerxes by this presumptuous act assumed a superiority over the divinity of the sea.

Fall to some daring hand an easy prey.

ATOS. This from too frequent converse with bad men
Th' impetuous Xerxes learn'd: These caught his ear
With thy great deeds, as winning for thy sons
Vast riches with thy conquering spear, whilst he
Tim'rous and slothful never, save in sport,
Lifted his lance, nor added to the wealth
Won by his noble fathers. This reproach,
Oft by bad men repeated, urg'd his soul
T' attempt this war, and lead his troops to Greece.

DAR. Great deeds have they achiev'd, and memorable
For ages: Never hath this wasted state
Suffer'd such ruin, since Heav'n's awful king
Gave to one lord Asia's extended plains
White with innumerous flocks, and to his hands
Consign'd th' imperial sceptre. Her brave hosts
A Mede first led *. The virtues of his son
Fix'd firm the empire, for his temperate soul
Breath'd prudence. Cyrus next, by fortune grac'd,
Adorn'd the throne, and bless'd his grateful friends
With peace: He to his mighty monarchy
Join'd Lydia, and the Phrygians; to his pow'r
Ionia bent reluctant; but the Gods
With victory his gentle virtues crown'd.
His son then wore the regal diadem.
Next, to disgrace his country, and to stain
The splendid glories of this ancient throne,
Rose Mardus: him with righteous vengeance fir'd
Artaphrenes, and his confederate chiefs,

* The English reader will be contented with this short account of the Persian monarchy as Æschylus hath given it: this was sufficient for his purpose. The excellent Stanley hath entered into a long disquisition; but, as Pauw well observes, Ea non sunt hujus loci: this is rather the province of history than of a detached note.

Crush'd in his palace: Maraphis assum'd
The sceptre: after him Artaphrenes.
Me next to this exalted eminence,
Crowning my great ambition, fortune rais'd;
In many a glorious field my glittering spear
Flamed in the van of Persia's numerous hosts;
But never wrought such ruin to the state.
Xerxes, my son, in all the pride of youth
Listens to youthful counsels, my commands
No more remember'd: hence, my hoary friends,
Not the whole line of Persia's sceptred lords,
You know it well, so wasted her brave sons.

CHOR. Why this *? To what fair end are these thy words
Directed? Sovereign Lord, instruct thy Persians
How, 'midst this ruin, best to guide their state.

DAR. No more 'gainst Greece lead your embattled hosts;
Not tho' your deep'ning phalanx spreads the field
Out-numb'ring theirs: their very earth fights for them.

CHOR. What may thy words import? How fight for them?

DAR. With famine it destroys your cumbrous train.

CHOR. Choice levies, prompt for action, will we send.

DAR. Those, in the fields of Greece that now remain,
Shall not revisit safe the Persian shore.

CHOR. What, shall not all the host of Persia pass
Again from Europe o'er the Hellespont?

DAR. Of all their numbers few †, if ought avails

* The Chorus had reason to ask this question, as the tendency of the speech of Darius is obscure enough: it means, that all the wars of all their former kings, and even his own, though the mention of Marathon is carefully avoided, were not so destructive to Persia as this expedition of Xerxes; therefore, if they regarded the welfare of their country, they must think no more of invading Greece.

† This is prophetically spoken of the battle of Platæa, which in the following year totally destroyed the remains of this mighty armament. The messenger could not relate this, nor the Chorus know it, as the event had not yet

The faith of heav'n-sent oracles to him
That weighs the past, in their accomplishment
Not partial: hence he left, in faithless hope
Confiding, his selected train of heroes.
These have their station where Asopus flows
Wat'ring the plain, whose grateful currents roll
Diffusing plenty thro' Bœotia's fields.
There misery waits to crush them with the load
Of heaviest ills, in vengeance for their proud
And impious daring; for where'er they held
Thro' Greece their march, they fear'd not to profane
The statues of the Gods*; their hallow'd shrines
Emblaz'd, o'erturn'd their altars, and in ruins,
Rent from their firm foundations, to the ground
Levell'd their temples: Such their frentic deeds,
Nor less their suff'rings: greater still await them;
For vengeance hath not wasted all her stores,
The heap yet swells: for in Platæa's plains
Beneath the Doric spear the clotted mass
Of carnage shall arise, that the high mounds,

happened: but the shade of Darius having something of divinity, and observing that part of the oracles of the Gods were already accomplished, could with confidence declare, that the other part must have its completion.—HEATH.—These oracles were mentioned before.

* The ancient Persians erected neither temples nor statues to their Gods, because they did not think them endued with human forms, nor to be confined within walls, as to whom all things ought to be free and open: their sacrifices were performed on high places to Jupiter, or the circumference of the sky, to the sun and moon, to the earth, to fire, to water, and to the winds. Xerxes retained enough of this purer Sabaism, to demolish all the temples of Greece in his march; though Hyde, in commenting on this narration of Herodotus, informs us, that Persia at that time abounded with temples; hence Xerxes, amidst his devastations, consistently enough with the principles and practice of his country, spared the temple of Apollo at Delos, and the temple of Diana at Ephesus, considering the one as consecrated to the Sun, the other to the Moon.

Piled o'er the dead, to late posterity
Shall give this silent record to men's eyes,
That proud aspiring thoughts but ill beseem
Weak mortals: for oppression, when it springs,
Puts forth the blade of vengeance, and its fruit
Yields a ripe harvest of repentant woe.
Behold this vengeance, and remember Greece,
Remember Athens*: henceforth let not pride,
Her present state disdaining, strive to grasp
Another's, and her treasur'd happiness
Shed on the ground: such insolent attempts
Awake the vengeance of offended Jove.
But you, whose age demands more temperate thoughts,
With words of well-plac'd counsel teach his youth
To curb that pride, which from the Gods calls down
Destruction on his head. And thou, whose age
The miseries of thy Xerxes sink with sorrow,
Go to thy house, thence choose the richest robe,
And meet thy son; for thro' the rage of grief
His gorgeous vestments from his royal limbs
Are foully rent. With gentlest courtesy
Sooth his affliction; for his duteous ear,
I know, will listen to thy voice alone.
Now to the realms of darkness I descend.
My ancient friends, farewell, and 'midst these ills
Each day in pleasures bathe your drooping spirits,
For treasur'd riches nought avail the dead.

ATOSSA, CHORUS.

CHOR. These many present, many future ills
Denounc'd on Persia sink my soul with grief.

ATOS. Unhappy fortune, what a tide of ills

* The intention of this fine reflection was to incline the Athenians to accept the Persian monarch's proposal of peace, which Themistocles alone opposed.

Bursts o'er me! Chief this foul disgrace, which shows
My son divested of his rich attire,
His royal robes all rent, distracts my thoughts.
But I will go, choose the most gorgeous vest,
And haste to meet my son. Ne'er in his woes
Will I forsake whom my soul holds most dear.

CHORUS.

STRO. 1. Ye pow'rs that rule the skies,
Memory recals our great, our happy fate,
Our well-appointed state,
The scenes of glory opening to our eyes,
When this vast empire o'er
The good Darius, with each virtue blest
That forms a monarch's breast,
Shielding his subjects with a father's care,
Invincible in war,
Extended like a God his awful pow'r.
Then spread our arms their glory wide,
Guarding to peace her golden reign;
Each tow'red city saw with pride
Safe from the toils of war her homeward-marching train.

ANTIS. 1. Nor Halys' shallow strand
He pass'd, nor from his palace mov'd his state;
He spoke; his word was Fate:
What strong-based cities cou'd his might withstand?
Not those that lift their heads
Where to the sea the floods of Strymon pass,
Leaving the huts of Thrace;
Nor those, that far th' extended ocean o'er
Stand girt with many a tow'r;
Nor where the Hellespont his broad wave spreads;
Nor the firm bastions' rampir'd might,
Whose foot the deep Propontis laves;

Nor those, that glorying in their height
Frown o'er the Pontic sea, and shade his darken'd waves.

STRO. 2. Each sea-girt isle around
Bow'd to this monarch: humbled Lesbos bow'd;
Paros, of its marble proud;
Naxos with vines, with olives Samos crown'd:
Him Myconus ador'd:
Chios, the seat of beauty; Andros steep,
That stretches o'er the deep
To meet the wat'ry Tenos; him each bay
Bound by th' Icarian sea,
Him Melos, Gnidus, Rhodes confess'd their lord:
O'er Cyprus stretch'd his sceptred hand:
Paphos and Solos own'd his pow'r,
And Salamis, whose hostile strand,
The cause of all our woe, is red with Persian gore.

ANTIS. 2. E'en the proud towns, that rear'd
Sublime along th' Ionian coast their tow'rs,
Where wealth her treasures pours,
Peopled from Greece, his prudent reign rever'd.
With such unconquer'd might
His hardy warriors shook th' embattled fields,
Heroes that Persia yields,
And those from distant realms that took their way,
And wedg'd in close array
Beneath his glitt'ring banners claim'd the fight.
But now these glories are no more;
Farewell the big war's plumed pride:
The Gods have crush'd this trophied pow'r,
Sunk are our vanquish'd arms beneath th' indignant tide.

XERXES, CHORUS.

XERX. Ah me, how sudden have the storms of Fate,
Beyond all thought, all apprehension, burst

On my devoted head! O Fortune, Fortune!
With what relentless fury hath thy hand
Hurl'd desolation on the Persian race!
Woe unsupportable! The tort'ring thought
Of our lost youth comes rushing on my mind,
And sinks me to the ground. O Jove, that I
Had died with those brave men that died in fight!

CHOR. O thou afflicted monarch, once the lord
Of marshall'd armies, of the lustre beam'd
From glory's ray o'er Persia, of her sons
The pride, the grace, whom ruin now hath sunk
In blood! Th' unpeopled land laments her youth
By Xerxes led to slaughter, till the realms
Of death are gorg'd with Persians; for the flow'r
Of all the realm, thousands, whose dreadful bows
With arrowy show'r annoy'd the foe, are fall'n.

XERX. Your fall, heroic youths, distracts my soul.

CHOR. And Asia sinking on her knee, O king,
Oppress'd, with griefs oppress'd, bends to the earth.

XERX. And I, O wretched fortune, I was born
To crush, to desolate my ruin'd country.

CHOR. I have no voice, no swelling harmony,
No descant, save these notes of woe,
Harsh, and responsive to the sullen sigh,
Rude strains, that unmelodious flow,
To welcome thy return.

XERX. Then bid them flow, bid the wild measures flow,
Hollow, unmusical, the notes of grief;
They suit my fortune, and dejected state.

CHOR. Yes, at thy royal bidding shall the strain
Pour the deep sorrows of my soul;
The suff'rings of my bleeding country plain,
And bid the mournful measures roll.

Again the voice of wild despair
With shrilling shrieks shall pierce the air;
For high the God of War his flaming crest
Rais'd, with the fleet of Greece surrounded,
The haughty arms of Greece with conquest blest,
And Persia's wither'd force confounded,
Dash'd on the dreary beach her heroes slain,
Or whelm'd them in the darken'd main.

XERX. To swell thy griefs ask ev'ry circumstance.

CHOR. Where are thy valiant friends, thy chieftains where?
Pharnaces, Susas, and the might
Of Pelagon, and Dotamas? The spear
Of Agabatas bold in fight?
Psammis in mailed cuirass drest,
And Susiscanes' glitt'ring crest?

XERX. Dash'd from the Tyrian vessel on the rocks
Of Salamis they sunk, and smear'd with gore
The heroes on the dreary strand are stretch'd.

CHOR. Where is Pharnuchus? Ariomardus where,
With ev'ry gentle virtue graced?
Lilæus, that from chiefs renown'd in war
His high-descended lineage traced?
Where rears Sebalces his crown-circled head?
Where Tharybis to battles bred,
Artembares, Hystæchmes bold,
Memphis, Masistres sheath'd in gold?

XERX. Wretch that I am! These on th' abhorred town
Ogygian Athens *, roll'd their glowing eyes

* Ogyges was one of the most ancient kings of Attica, or Bœotia; authors are not agreed as to the place; we have the epithet before applied to Thebes. From the antiquity of this king, all things very ancient are called Ogygian: thus even the Egyptian Thebes is Ogygian, and in Pindar we find Ogygian mountains.—STANLEY.

Indignant; but at once in the fierce shock
Of battle fell, dash'd breathless on the ground.

CHOR. There does the son of Batanochus lie,
Thro' whose rich veins th' unsullied blood
Of Susamus, down from the lineage high
Of noble Mygabatas flow'd:
Alpistus, who with faithful care
Number'd the deep'ning files of war,
The monarch's eye *; on the ensanguin'd plain

* The Persian monarchs had officers whose province it was to observe and inform the king of all that was transacted in his wide dominions; they were therefore called the King's Eyes: this was an office of great trust, and usually assigned to the most faithful and honourable Satraps.—STANLEY.

And now, pour donner le congé à ces remarques, the translator thinks it necessary to declare, that living altogether in a private and retired station, he had not, during his engagement in this work, the opportunity of consulting any learned friend on any difficulty, and difficulties enough occurred; neither did he know, till after the translation was published, that there were any annotations on Æschylus, except what Pauw has given with Stanley's edition: therefore whatever mistakes or inaccuracies may have escaped him, they are to be attributed entirely to his own want of judgment. In reading Pauw he could observe, that he sometimes suffered himself to be hurried into errors; and he lamented, that so able a critic would not allow himself time to revise what he had written: this he ascribed to a certain impetuosity of temper, which seems natural to him; he also disapproves his rude and offensive bluntness, and wished that he had learned to sacrifice to the Graces; but he saw in this saucy man much erudition, a bold genius, and a strong conception of his author's meaning, which enabled him to elucidate some passages, which were before involved in tenfold darkness: no wonder therefore that he gratefully acknowledged his obligations to him. But he soon found, that he had taken an unpopular part; the translation was scarcely published, when he was taught to know, that his honourable mention of Pauw had given offence; he was surprised and hurt at this, but was quickly informed, that M. D'Orville had made a collection of Pauw's crudities, and published them purposely to expose the man. Shortly after this, a learned friend sent him Mr. Heath's notes: this gentleman was so highly offended at Pauw's "wanton "insolence and contumelious arrogance," that he sees nothing in him but "the grossest ignorance, and a perpetual alacrity in blundering;" and if at any time he is compelled to acknowledge the justness of a remark, he accounts for it as for the blind man's shooting the crow; he therefore profess-

Low is the mighty warrior laid?
Is great Æbares 'mongst the heroes slain,
And Partheus number'd with the dead?—
Ah me! those bursting groans deep-charg'd with woe
The fate of Persia's princes show.

XERX. To my griev'd memory thy mournful voice,
Tun'd to the saddest notes of woe, recals
My brave friends lost; and my rent heart returns
In dreadful symphony the sorrowing strain.

CHOR. Yet once more shall I ask thee, yet once more,
Where is the Mardian Xanthes' might,
The daring chief, that from the Pontic shore
Led his strong phalanx to the fight?
Anchares where, whose high-rais'd shield
Flam'd foremost in th' embattled field?
Where the high leaders of thy mail-clad horse,
Dãïxis and Arsaces where?
Where Cigdagatas and Lythimnas' force,

edly writes against Pauw: this has carried him too frequently into an asperity of style, more indecent than that which had excited his indignation; besides that horrid sneer, which is like the American mode of tarring and feathering a man that has been so unhappy as to offend them: this is the more to be lamented, as in every other respect Mr. Heath seems to have been a man of a very candid and amiable disposition. But this is not the worst: his perpetual propensity to reprobate Pauw has sometimes misled him to observations very unworthy of him as a scholar and a critic. In this case what could the translator do? His nature is most averse to disputation: but these annotators pull violently different ways; the translation was between them, and was given to the public before he had seen the learned observations of the latter. He has done what he is persuaded a fair and honest man ought to do, he has carefully revised the translation; where he is convinced that he was mistaken, he has acknowledged and corrected the mistake; wherever in a disputed passage he thinks he has reason to adhere to his former interpretation, he fairly gives his reason; the learned reader will judge. Mr. Heath's great and deserved reputation made this in a manner necessary for his own vindication; but he hopes, that he has not suffered any asperity to mingle with his dissent, as he would be the first to be ashamed of having violated that candour and good manners which are due from one gentleman to another.

Waving untir'd his purple spear?

XERX. Entomb'd, I saw them in the earth entomb'd;
Nor did the rolling car with solemn state
Attend their rites: I follow'd: low they lie,
Ah me, the once great leaders of my host,
Low in the earth, without their honours lie!

CHOR. O woe, woe, woe! Unutterable woe
The Demons of Revenge have spread;
And Ate from her drear abode below
Rises to view the horrid deed.

XERX. Dismay, and rout, and ruin, ills that wait
On man's afflicted fortune, sink us down.

CHOR. Dismay, and rout, and ruin on us wait,
And all the vengeful storms of Fate:
Ill flows on ill, on sorrows sorrows rise;
Misfortune leads her baleful train;
Before th' Ionian squadrons Persia flies,
Or sinks ingulf'd beneath the main:
Fall'n, fall'n is her imperial pow'r,
And conquest on her banners waits no more.

XERX. At such a fall, such troops of heroes lost,
How can my soul but sink in deep despair!
Cease thy sad strain.

CHOR. Is all thy glory lost?

XERX. Seest thou these poor remains of my rent robes?

CHOR. I see, I see.

XERX. And this ill-furnish'd quiver?

CHOR. Wherefore preserv'd?

XERX. To store my treasur'd arrows.

CHOR. Few, very few.

XERX. And few my friendly aids.

CHOR. I thought these Grecians shrunk appall'd at arms.

XERX. No: they are bold and daring; these sad eyes
Beheld their violent and deathful deeds.

CHOR. The ruin, say'st thou, of thy shatter'd fleet?

XERX. And in the anguish of my soul I rent
My royal robes.
CHOR. Woe, woe!
XERX. And more than woe.
CHOR. Redoubled, threefold woe!
XERX. Disgrace to me,
But triumph to the foe.
CHOR. Are all thy pow'rs
In ruin crush'd?
XERX. No Satrap guards me now.
CHOR. Thy faithful friends sunk in the roaring main.
XERX. Weep, weep their loss, and lead me to my house;
Answer my grief with grief, an ill return
Of ills for ills. Yet once more raise that strain
Lamenting my misfortunes; beat thy breast,
Strike, heave the groan; awake the Mysian strain
To notes of loudest woe; rend thy rich robes,
Pluck up thy beard, tear off thy hoary locks,
And bathe thine eyes in tears: thus thro' the streets
Solemn and slow with sorrow lead my steps;
Lead to my house, and wail the fate of Persia.
CHOR. Yes, once more at thy bidding shall the strain
Pour the deep sorrows of my soul;
The suff'rings of my bleeding country plain,
And bid the Mysian measures roll.
Again the voice of wild despair
With shrilling shrieks shall pierce the air;
For high the God of War his flaming crest
Rais'd, with the fleet of Greece surrounded,
The haughty arms of Greece with conquest blest,
And Persia's wither'd force confounded,
Dash'd on the dreary beach her heroes slain,
Or whelm'd them in the darken'd main.

FINIS.

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